

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

A MAGAZINE FOR A DEMOCRACY OF CONTENT

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VOL. 8

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 1956

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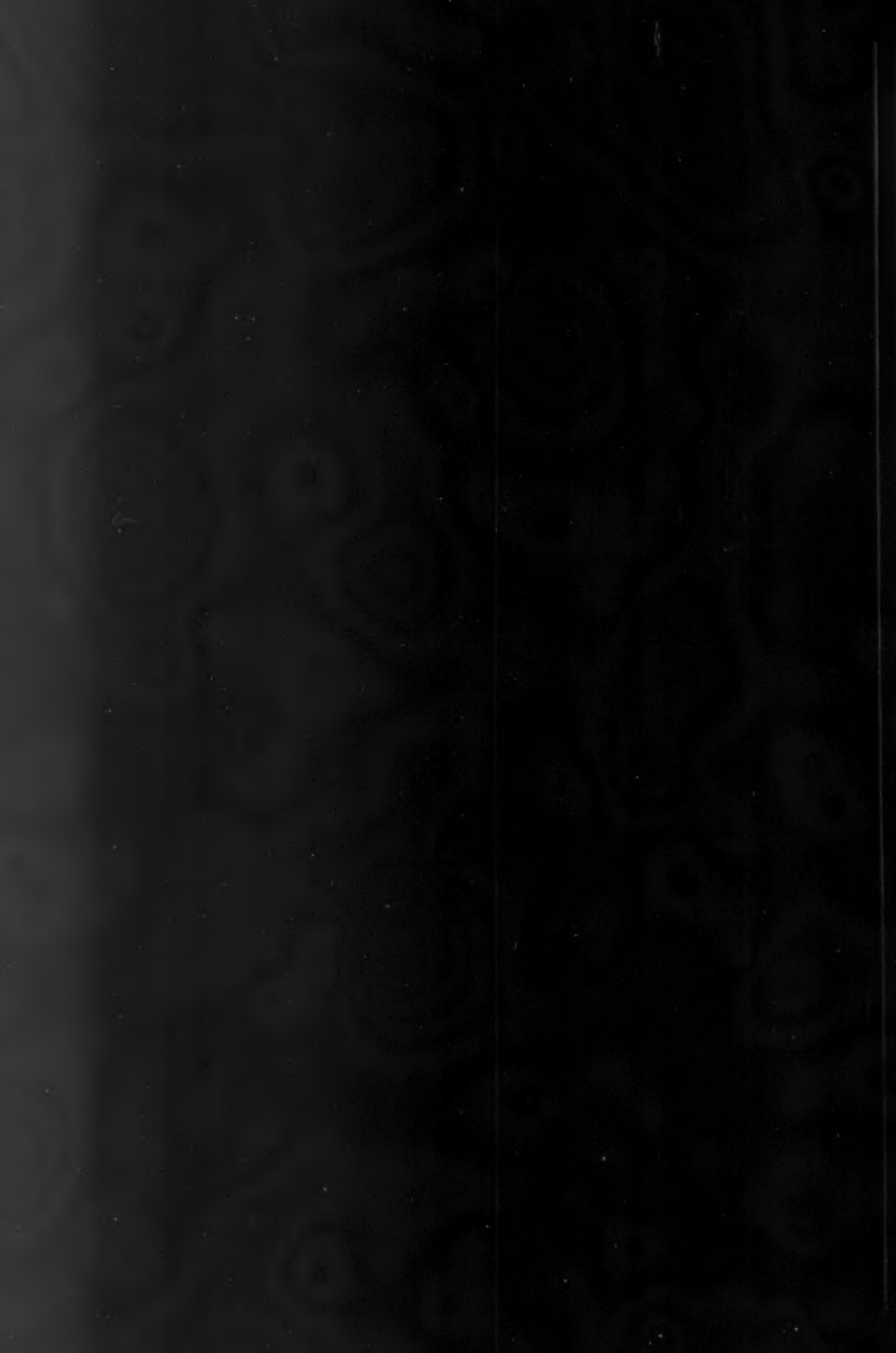
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37, PENTON STREET,
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Paul Brass

THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST REMILITARISATION IN RETROSPECT

THE numerous, varied and interesting letters which we received in reply to our leaflet against remilitarisation, were a striking testimony to the vitality and extent of the anti-remilitarisation movement. *Dinge der Zeit* devoted an exceptional amount of space to the critical review of these letters and documents which were also published in book form, and naturally we received further letters.

When looking at the letters relating to the book about the campaign, what strikes one first is that they fall far behind those received as a result of the leaflet—in number, importance, variety, political attitude, general liveliness, and every respect. This is particularly noteworthy when one compares the volume of the four-page leaflet with that of the 268 page book. Could this be due precisely to this great volume, as some correspondents suggest? In a leaflet, which gives only the outlines, there is more to question, to argue, to interpret, than in a book which seeks to fill every gap. Against this stands the fact that in the latter many organisations found their statements reprinted, criticised and commented on, and that they have since had practical experience of what they and what we held to be correct. Should this not have given more than ample material for further discussion and for striking a balance of the experiences made? After all, why does one take up a stand with such energy, to what end does one ask for comments, for help, discussion, cooperation etc., if one wishes simply to withdraw at the very moment when the result is to be evaluated, or the affair has not gone “according to plan”? There was much talk about responsibility, setting aside of personal interests, unyielding resolution, sacred duties, and so on, while the pudding was in the oven—but when it came to eating it, they all behaved exactly like the adversary they had so bitterly attacked, and did not bother a minute longer about what they themselves had demanded, promised and sworn.

Not one of the organisations in question sent a reply that could be considered as a contribution to the discussion or as an attempt to learn from mistakes and draw the necessary lesson. A few wrote friendly letters, e.g. Paul Debes of the “*Streitlose*”. But let us recall that Zander in the course of a searching discussion of Debes’s statement, discussed such important problems as the atomisation and self-alienation of man in modern society, the overcoming of capitalism, the question of immediate and strategic goals. Is it expecting too much of Debes that he should talk these matters over with his friends, summarise the result and continue the discussion further? Even he does not appear to have as much as thought of that. But he who, in all friendliness, simply ignores political argument, must not be surprised at being, as Debes puts it, “out-distanced by events”.

With all that Paul Debes is nevertheless unquestionably “a mild case”—most organisations whose documents or letters were examined in Zander’s book, have not given a sign of life at all. Yet they all received a copy of No. 12/13 of *Dinge der Zeit* with an accompanying letter giving even the

page on which they were dealt with. Have these organisations informed their members of what happened and given them an opportunity of forming an opinion on the subject? We fear that everything remained in the hands of the higher-ups, and that these higher-ups are not the right people with whom one can struggle for democratic rights. When political organisations fail in so elementary a question as that of discussion, it can cause no surprise that they were incapable even of understanding clearly what their task was in relation to a mass movement, let alone of carrying it through successfully. In other words: The failure of those who had put themselves forward as leaders and spokesmen of the movement led of necessity to its ruin. The movement itself had gone as far as, in the given case (without organisation), it could possibly go. With an unsurpassable instinct it had started from a question—that of remilitarisation, particularly disagreeable for a people suffering from the war and its consequences—, in which resistance to the generally unpopular government policy was possible, and had made clearly known the determination of the people to carry through its own wishes in this question independently of all ruling powers. All that was necessary was now to concentrate all forces on the struggle against remilitarisation, to come to an agreement about the practical work required, to keep solemnly given promises and to place oneself loyally at the service of the mass movement.

Instead we find everywhere that the leadership of the organisations did the exact opposite. When it was a question of working together in practical matters (forcing a plebiscite or participating in the parliamentary elections) they remained stuck away in the birdcage of their own organisations; when however it was necessary to protect the essential character of the mass movement (independence from and towards all quarters), they made concessions for the sake of "unity" which contradicted the essential goal of the movement and reduced it to impotence (the demoralising failure to criticise clearly the remilitarisation in East Germany which had already taken place).

These two mistakes, which paralysed the movement politically as well as morally and destroyed all prospect of success, since they prevented it from organising itself in accordance with its aims, were committed by the most diverse organisations in equal measure: it began with the declaration of the Stalinist-infested Main Committee (a declaration which was both politically miserable and—in typically bureaucratic fashion—patronising to the mass of the people), and ended with the GVP leadership autocratically carrying through, with every bureaucratic device, their alliance with Wirth-Elfes' Stalinist front organisation and thus destroying the last hopes. (Besides: This alliance was a complete betrayal of everything that the GVP leadership had said right up to the day before, and was entered into on the plea of "shortage of funds" and the "necessity" of gaining, under all circumstances, a sufficient number of seats in the new parliament to play at being the grain that tips the scales. Even the "argument" was advanced that Heinemann, Scheu and others had, through their political stand, lost all chance of winning a livelihood and would be "financially ruined" if not returned to the new Bundestag as members. Sensible people replied at the time that alliance with Wirth-Elfes was the surest means *not* to be elected, but leaving that aside, one has plainly no right to open one's mouth so wide and to put oneself forward as an "example" to the people when one is not willing to behave with firmness of character and take the consequences. By this treacherous alliance, the leadership of the GVP had at once forfeited the confidence of the public and signally failed in the elections, though we have yet to learn

whether the heroes of the GVP, allegedly "so gravely threatened", have meanwhile starved.)

The essence of our participation in the campaign consisted in combating openly from the beginning the political and organisational mistakes which have been the doom of the movement. It was for us never a question of a correct or incorrect assessment of individuals nor of *common* political errors, but of bureaucratic degeneration under the pressure of surrounding conditions, which manifests itself in the smallest and most miserable organisations and *explains* the failure of individuals. Against the Stalinists, to whose political poisoning the GVP, important because of its prestige, finally also succumbed, we had already warned in our leaflet in so unequivocal a "tone" that it got on the nerves of delicate people. While others fell for the swindle of the East-West antagonism and concluded that whoever was against Adenauer's rearmament had to join forces with his "enemies" in the East German quisling government, we have always demonstrated the business partnership of the "enemy" brothers by their deeds. While the hope of reunification, encouraged particularly by the Stalinists, like a will o' the wisp enticed almost everybody into the swamp, we unceasingly made the distinction that the struggle had to be carried on *independently* of both sides, but that to prevent the remilitarisation in the *West* was the only way to arrive at the reunification of Germany. (By the way: What have those clever gentlemen with a mania for reunification to say now about the result of their "tactics" and of their future prospects? It appears that they consider their best "tactic" after the disgrace that has overtaken them, to keep their mouths shut.)

The miscarriage of the movement, which our influence was not strong enough to prevent, can only underline the correctness of the lessons contained in Zander's "handbook" which is equally important in philosophical, economic, organisational and practical-political respects. And the more the organisational problem reveals itself as the key question, on which a very promising movement foundered, the more importance acquires Zander's work on the matter. He writes for instance:

The fundamental shortcoming of the numerous groups and tendencies that exist in Germany seems to me to consist in this, that not one of them (so far as I could find out) has tackled the organisational problem in such a way as was required, on the one hand by historical experience with the traditional forms, and on the other by the completely changed circumstances and economic conditions. There is "much going on" and plenty of good intentions, but for the most part little intellectual capital and ability to go down to the root of questions. The meanest little idea and slightest pretext are often enough to form an "independent" group, to establish "one's own" magazine, "one's own" little printed sheet—almost *all begin* with the question of finances and then busy themselves with the setting up of an apparatus of officials, without which they cannot "carry on". It is the familiar phenomenon of atomisation in bourgeois society—innumerable prescriptions and recipes (often, to be blunt, amusingly grotesque), but no solid foundations.

A COMPLAINT

On this point, Theodor Kögler of the *Freiheitsbund* (Hamburg) wrote us the following letter on July 10th, 1952:

To the Editor, "*Dinge der Zeit*".

For the sake of good order, I must ask for correction.

In No. 11, page 168, it is said that *not one* of the numerous groups and tendencies in Germany have tackled the organisational problem. From all our Information Bulletins... it is clear, that we are uninterruptedly working for a new "organisational principle" and consider it more important than all political "programmes".

As further evidence there are earlier discussion articles, which already go into considerable detail, even though "the evolution into something more comprehensive" has not yet been completed. Nevertheless the whole discussion now concerns itself with this "more comprehensive" and it will only come to pass if the organisational principles for which you stand as well, are *concretised* and observed in practice.

So, without boasting, your assertion does *not* apply to the *Freiheitsbund*.

Yours, Th. Kögler.

Unfortunately we have not the means to publish our work, so that the discussions are restricted to a relatively small circle.

It is unfortunate that the reply to this letter has to begin by stating that Kögler quotes incorrectly. As is evident from the quotation immediately preceding Kögler's letter, the point was not that German groups had simply not come to grips with the organisational problem at all (this would have been absurd, for nowhere are things "organised" with such stolid determination as in the dear German fatherland). It was only asserted that the problem was not tackled in *such a way as* (that means both in measure and manner) *circumstances require*. What is required by experience with traditional forms (above all the Labour movement), changed circumstances and economic conditions, has already been thoroughly explained in the article "The Great Utopia" (C. I. No. 5) to which we must here refer. We quote from it only the conclusion which results from the whole investigation (p. 15):

Once it has been granted that in capitalist society everything without exception becomes a commodity on the one hand and that, on the other, the most heroic idealism of single individuals as well as organisations conceived out of the purest motives cannot protect itself against being transformed into an end in itself (fetish) composed of many ramifications, it follows that it is primarily this process of becoming autonomous that must be absolutely prevented by the lay-out of the organisation.

Now what design is Kögler giving to his organisation, in order "above all" to prevent the fatal process of becoming an end in itself? We have before us two long articles by him, a "Draft for the Constitution of the German Independence Movement" and "Party or Movement", dated May and June 1952. In these Kögler rejects the usual scheme of a Party as an "assemblage of like-minded people" and calls for a movement in the nature of a "fencing arena" in which through hard, even acrimonious struggles amongst the new forces, quality will be discovered. We could let that pass if we were confronted with what Zander calls the "polis", that is, if there were a form of organisation which ensures free discussion and free decision in all cases in which *diverse* tendencies deliberate about a *common* goal or wish to clarify a controversial point. It is clear that fetishised organisations are not interested in the "polis" and (as the experience with remilitarisation has shown) make themselves scarce when "quality is to be discovered". It is on the other hand clear that the "quality" must in all cases sever connection with those with whom there is no agreement about the common goal or anything beyond that, and with whom no result can be achieved in controversial questions. There is thus no point in confounding the *organisational* question with the question of a *movement*, since the question is precisely how the organisation, upon which the spontaneous movement will rely, must be constituted in order to be guaranteed against degeneration.*

Contrary to Kögler's fine statement, no organisation which takes itself

* Organisation and movement are by no means identical—popular movements in particular cannot be "created" but arise spontaneously and must either improvise an *ad hoc* organisation (e.g. councils) or rely on already existing organisations.

seriously, can forego the agreement of its members on all basic questions (which, if Kögler wants to express it in that way, comes down to an "assemblage of like-minded people"), if it wants to be capable of action and not to fail lamentably, as Kögler's organisation has already done in the matter of political discussion. In no case can an organisation which, from the outset, *makes a fetish* of the organisational "principle" and *declares it more important than all political programmes*, be more than organised political impotence. So long as there exist no free self-governing communities liberated from commodity production, orientated solely in the direction of "quality", and unhindered by considerations of profit, so long are there politics, political organisations and political programmes. The evil does not consist in the fact that everyone has "an opinion", but in the fact that parties, organisations, groups etc., are either a gallimaufrey of many opinions or else are organisations which, in the guise of an "assemblage of like-minded people", put forward ideas at once false, limited, one-sided, determined by particular interests, profit-seeking, totally harmful etc., and which cannot conduct a free discussion about their opinions, if only because to do so would jeopardise their particular interests.

Thus anyone who takes part in politics must gather together people who are of the same mind; and if Kögler places little or no value on the programme, he nevertheless gets together people (or attempts to), who have the same opinion about the *organisational principle*. From this already it follows that the organisational question is a *political* question, i.e. an organisation cannot be divorced from the content of its endeavours. In the final analysis organisational principle and programme are always one, even if the organisation does not know this. There are, e.g., sects, for which free discussion constitutes the whole "programme", and which for that reason may imagine that they represent something like the "polis". But the polis does not have discussion for the sake of discussion—real commodity fetishism this—but in order to come to decisions by majority resolutions. And to what decisions? So long as the polis has a political character (in the "pure" polis the political character is overcome and harmony is the rule in all *basic questions*, for the social question has been solved), these are either decisions like the one about remilitarisation for which agreement on basic questions is not required; or else they are decisions concerning the basic questions themselves, which enter into the "programme" and its theoretical foundations. In the nature of the case, an organisation can conceive the idea of the polis and take it completely seriously only if it wishes to overcome its own political character, to establish the "pure" polis and if it has made the fetishisation of politics impossible by reason of its organisational principle. On the other side, only such an organisation wishes to overcome politics, to follow a concordant organisational principle and thus to *be* already a foreshadowing of the "pure" polis, as has freed the organisation internally and externally from particular interests, seeks an immediate *all-encompassing* solution of social problems and makes this the cardinal point in its programme.

Here comes into play what Zander called the tackling of the organisational problem in such a manner as on the one hand historical experience with traditional forms, and on the other the completely changed circumstances and world economic conditions require. We, for instance, as a result of such an explanation, have become convinced that both commodity economy and *all* organisations which remain within its framework have exhausted their

possibilities. Organisations which, in one way or another, merely tinker with commodity economy and only want to "patch it up", will in the best of cases remain impotent, and in the worst (and by far the most frequent) eventualities will only increase the evil. On the other hand historical experience (particularly the bankruptcy of the labour movement as an attempt to overcome particular interests) has demonstrated that every organisation based on the apparent or real interests of a *class* remains bound by particular interests and in the end serves only the interests of a new *bureaucracy* and its followers. These two points encompass the completely changed circumstances (impossibility of carrying the development further through the pursuit of particular interests) and the world economic situation (the necessity of preventing the barbarism of a commodity society choking in its own wealth, by means of an organisation which carries out the transformation of commodity economy into so-called "production for use", without bringing to *power* a new party or a new class).

On the basis of this conviction which we hold with thorough "like-mindedness", we formulated our organisational principles and said to ourselves that the necessary organisation had to equip itself with material guarantees against the ever-present danger of bureaucratic degeneration; that is against the danger that the apparatus, the property of the organisation, the material interests of a paid bureaucracy, etc., hardened and became ends in themselves which ruled the organisation and falsified its original purpose. We at one stroke abolished all this as well as organisational statutes, and entered the "fencing arena" by no means without a programme, but rather with the firm intention of either going through with our convictions or being taught better by more discerning people. (This is of course put shortly—the rest must be read in "The Great Utopia" and the discussion articles in connection with it.) We were, in other words, our convictions notwithstanding, a "polis" and could with equanimity face the danger that we might be "destroyed" by admitting every kind of criticism of ourselves, since we were bound together only by the general interest of society and could only gain through the better knowledge of wiser heads. Let anyone try to send in to any other organisation, for instance to a pacifist, social-democratic, "non-party" or "communist" paper, an article which radically and outspokenly takes up the views put forward in it and tries to show that everything done and said in the paper in question is limping on one leg, if not on all four—something which can always be done to ours. He will then make the experience that at every turn things are so organised as is in consonance with particular interests. Since all, all without exception, live off the same miserable commonplaces, swindles, panaceas or dribs and drabs of ideas, and merely *put a different complexion* on the same stuff in accordance with their particular interests, it follows that they all have the identical organisational "principle": to establish and maintain their "own business" under all circumstances whatsoever. Many succeed, many quickly go bankrupt, many attempt it time and again, and, naturally, the more stubbornly the less intellectual capital they dispose of.

Kögler, too, is only one of the many who want to "organise" splinter parties but who "unfortunately" have not the means to get the business going. He wants to organise the whole movement and thinks so exclusively about the form that he "organises" in mid-air and completely loses sight of the content or intellectual capital which after all, must hold everything together. (Of course, when one is as wealthy as our bourgeois organisations including Social-Democrats and Communists, and disposes of "persuasive" money capital, then it is easy to have a business of one's own.)

He begins his elucidations in "Party or Movement" with the observation that the perspectives for a union of independent German forces of the East and the West are favourable. He is however shocked that there has so far been no serious discussion "about the concrete *form*" or about the method(!) of leadership. For our part we are far more shocked about the fact that Kögler has not a word to say about what the independent forces in fact want. He will in all probability object to this that enough has already been said on the subject and that in this particular article he wished to concentrate exclusively on the organisational form. His tragic error, however, is just that he imagines he can speak about abstract form without speaking about content. The only result of this can be that he calls in Beelzebub to expel the Devil, i.e. that he wants to prevent the development of a bureaucracy by means of—bureaucratic statutes. Instead of seeing to it that the groups are fused together, and cleansed of their bureaucratic impurities, in the heat of a genuine discussion about questions of content, Kögler is anxious to preserve the groups together with their bureaucratic apparatus (these in particular), and to fix them into the framework of a carefully worked out super-bureaucracy. With this he at once falls back into mere organisational recipes, which in respect of principles are indistinguishable from other hoary recipes which are every time presented in a "new package". Thus: All groups are to have as many votes as they pay contributions (in just this way is "quality" discovered in joint-stock companies and the buying of votes made easy). Everything is to be built up in a hierarchical fashion: the common rank and file elect the local council, the local councils the district council, the district councils the council of the *Land* and these again the federal council. The higher the gentlemen of the councils have raised themselves above the mass of the people, the longer is their term of office (local councillor: six months; district councillor: a year; *Land* councillor: two years, etc.), for the higher a bureaucrat rises, the more he must become bureaucratised, and for that he must be given time. As expert designer of bureaucracies, Kögler also takes care that those elected get "their" votes certified, so that they can own them permanently; should the electors wish to change their minds, then it is just too bad—they have missed the bus.

The party newspaper is to be divided up and each group allotted space in proportion to its number of votes—in this way does "quality" come to the fore and thus it is "democratic". If there is a lone wolf who wants to put forward a new conception, to show new ways and to act as a genuine leader, but who for that very reason is not favourably received by the editorial and group bureaucracy—what is to happen? Well, we are sorry, but Kögler who otherwise takes care of everything, has not thought of that one. And yet he is particularly keen on a "leading elite" (also an old hobby-horse), but how he is going to get to this point other than "by authority" he does not say. That "leaders" are trained through *mutual* education and enjoy authority only on account of their quality and not because of their "position" (which is quite superfluous), i.e. simply do not come into the picture as "leaders" but have neither more nor less "to say" than anyone else—this does not enter his mind at all, and will probably remain quite incomprehensible to him since he is not willing to do away with the material differences within the organisation and to make *content* alone the determining factor. He writes in his letter which was quoted above: "Nevertheless the whole discussion now concerns itself with this 'more comprehensive' [which for him apparently is only the "more comprehensive" *organisation*], and it will only come to

pass when the organisational principles for which you stand as well, have been *concretised* and observed in practice".

Dear Mr. Kögler: Chance has it that the organisational principles for which we (but not you) stand, have already for seven years been most strictly observed in *practice* and have been continuously *concretised*. Moreover numbers 11, 12 and 13 of *Dinge der Zeit* (which make up the book on the Campaign) are basically only concretisation, explanation and practical application of these principles. One of the great merits of this book is precisely that it shows our principles in the concrete and proves that with us, the thing "works". If you wanted to arrive at something "more comprehensive", you should have entered into discussion about this which you had before your eyes, instead of asking for a "correction" to which you have no claim. Being concerned with the "elite", you have to learn first to read correctly and conscientiously, and then conscientiously to discuss what you have read.

Kögler's practice throughout is as was to be expected from these examples. He has given a further example with his beneficial activity as a member of the Central Committee, and yet another example he provides with his letter of 27.11.1952, in which he criticised the "Campaign in Documents". We reproduce this letter with abbreviations which, however, only affect explanations about parties and groups in Germany, but not his criticism of our own activities.

Concerning Nos. 12/13 (of *Dinge der Zeit*).

This publication bears the title "The Campaign against Remilitarisation in Germany". It lays stress on "the unlimited freedom of discussion and admission of criticism of every kind" (p. 309) and emphasizes, on p. 383, that real popular movements neither suppress nor conceal anything. I particularly regret that precisely you, as the foreshadowing of the "polis", most gravely offend against your own fundamental principles, since you have simply suppressed any mention of that essential part of the German popular movement which now as before carries the greatest weight. The movement consists of two columns, arising a) from, to speak summarily, the pacifist (or in common parlance the "Left") camp, and b) from equally summarily, the national, or to use a catchword, the "Right". With the best will in the world I cannot believe that you have remained completely ignorant of the second much more important component, namely the national. (Perhaps you have fewer reports before you from that side, but the fault is without doubt that of the leadership of the "polis" up to now, which from every line breathes only the past of the late radical "Left")....

If then you as a foreshadowing of the polis wish to reflect the development of the German popular movement, you will surely not be able to dispute the fact that this second aspect or face of the popular movement must under no circumstances be suppressed....

One further critical remark: You emphasize that the movement must educate and correct itself. Does this hold also for the foreshadowing polis, i.e. for yourselves? I cannot discover that you pay attention to conclusions which go beyond the horizon of the homeless Left. In this alone lies the explanation of the fact that you have no ear for the internal discussion in the so-called national camp, and only have room for such Nazi utterances as bear out *your* personal idea of a genuine "fascist". Please bear in mind in future that in Germany, and above all in the popular movement, a struggle is going on for a direction that gathers up the experiences as much of the Weimar republic, as of *National Socialism* and the occupation period. This process is much more painful and deep-going than is apparent from the one-sided documents published by you. I therefore wish that you would *educate* yourselves out of the prison of ideas of the late Left. If you were to lead the polis forward along these lines, you would be astonished at the extent of the response you would then find in Germany.

Now we particularly regret that Kögler, the expert for bureaucratisation and confusion, while he can write slovenly and ill-considered letters, once more shows that he does not know how to read. Instead of sending accusations

into the world and making a muddle of everything, he could have educated himself a little, had he taken note of what was already said in the "preamble" to Part 2 (Book edition, p. 49):

For reasons of space, only such material has been considered in the following survey as was sent to us in reaction to our own leaflet, as is also the case with the letter from Mrs. R. and the material used in the answer to it. It is therefore self-evident, that we only reproduce a section of a much greater picture, and even in this section leave aside everything that is not relevant to the campaign itself.

On p. 132 (Book edition) one can once more read:

No survey, no matter how extensive, can give an idea of the numerical strength of these (anti-Adenauer) forces and of the real mood of the popular movement, unless one imagines it supplemented by countless other manifestations. (The reader must always bear in mind that the present survey can deal only with the material that has reached us in reaction to our own leaflet, only with such letters as in one way or another, at least briefly, express themselves on the leaflet...)

That was clear, put forward no claim to comprehensiveness and has been conformed with in full without even thinking of Mr. Kögler's right or left columns, and without wasting even a second on such a hackneyed nonsense as homeless left and right. However it was not only our limited forces and means that prevented us from picking up all material *within reach*. Mr. Kögler clearly does not understand firstly that in the "Polis" only those have a right to be heard, who *take part* in it, be it (as is said on page 183 of the Book edition) as *members, guests, or opponents*. Everyone is *admitted*, but in specific conditions, only those may take the floor, who have caught the speaker's eye or who (indirectly) have been placed by others on the agenda (which in every instance must always be a limited one, since otherwise it would go on endlessly).

Secondly, we were bound on moral grounds to proceed cleanly and bring nothing into connection with our leaflet and our polis which had not, directly or indirectly, a connection with them in the sense of catching the speaker's eye.

Thirdly moreover it is clearly no accident that Kögler's "right" column which he *pretends* belonged to the *popular movement*, neither asked to be heard, nor was brought up by any of the others taking part. As it was a question of a popular movement against *remilitarisation* with which we, and with us the polis, were concerned, it stands to reason that only that came into consideration which was against *remilitarisation*. Mr. Kögler is however good enough himself to emphasize (in a part of his letter not quoted here) that his "right" column "without exception pleads for an armed(!) reunification". These protagonists of *armed reunification* belonged—this they rightly sensed and behaved accordingly—in the genuinely "right-column" movement for *armed reunification* (the leopard does not lose his armed spots!) and not in the movement against *remilitarisation*. Mr. Kögler has the right to flirt with every column and to fight us on account of our views, but he has no right to make out that pro-rearmament and anti-rearmament are the same, and to reproach us into the bargain with not having taken part in this swindle. We flatly deny that we have suppressed any mention of the "second face" of the popular movement (Mr. Kögler is clever enough to suppress the words "against remilitarisation")—we have simply passed it over and left it to Mr. Kögler as not relevant to the question in hand, or rather, we have in passing given this falsely painted face a slap on the cheek, wherever someone else showed up with it.

Moreover, we have just as much right to a *point of view* as Mr. Kögler, and hence we conduct the polis as we think right. Participation in the polis is, as we have always stressed, *voluntary*. If Mr. Kögler enters this "fencing arena" in order to discover quality through "hard, even acrimonious struggles", then we shall fight him (provided he does not choose the better part of valour) until we discover the quality and have learnt from him how one can conduct the polis *better*. With the disgusting habit of using slander as "argument" and sending into the world accusations which cannot be proved, we shall unfortunately not light upon better conduct. Is Mr. Kögler able to prove his slander that from every line of ours there speaks only the *past* of the late radical "Left"? The baseness of such a slander consists however chiefly in the tacit complementary assertion that the past of the late radical or spineless Right, Centre, Medley and what have you (as far as we are concerned also the *present* of late blockheads!) brings forth by itself better writings. We do not care what Kögler's *late* past is like—up to now the "acrimonious struggle" has only shown us that his writings, notwithstanding their "duelling-ground quality", are worth nothing, even worse, that they stink of the assertion: "I cannot discover that you pay attention to conclusions which go beyond the horizon of the homeless Left". We are naturally glad that Mr. Kögler disposes of a "home" in the form of his own junk shop without intellectual capital, but that is precisely the reason why he "cannot discover". We would thus have long to wait until he had *educated* himself out of the prison of ideas of his business of half-baked ideas and deigned to let us know *what* conclusions we should *pay attention to* in order to find favour in his eyes, even more (and this he has brought upon himself!) where conclusions can be found at all which go beyond our *completely homeless* horizon.

In this sense we propose to conduct the polis further, always striving only to discover "quality" and gladly renouncing the "great response" in Germany which the "second face" could bring us. Perhaps Mr. Kögler will be "astonished", but the matter stands thus: As long as the polis is still *political*, it does not limit itself to deliberations, common conclusions, "duels", etc. Furthermore it does not merely wait for guests or opponents with whom to engage, according to their behaviour, in friendly discussion or more or less violent "scuffles", but undertakes on the basis of the conclusion reached, all sorts of political, theoretical, even so to speak "horizontal" campaigns. In doing so, it intends to tickle *non-participating* opponents in their intellectual birdcages, to come to grips so to speak, with the horizon of the "second face" (more unfortunately cannot be done), and then to await patiently who ultimately will find the greater response.

A DIALOGUE

We also received two letters (voluminous compositions) from Hellmuth Draeger (*Sammlung zur Tat*), dated 26th November, 1952 and 6th April, 1953. There was also no point in publishing these carelessly written letters,* but to the extent that they deal critically with our work, they do not come into the category of "suppression" and must occupy the place of honour always reserved by this magazine for its critics. Incidentally, Ernst Zander

* We must however remain controllable in this respect as well, and therefore put the whole material at the disposal of those interested for examination and verification. If this leads to requests for dealing with certain points to be handled, or to objections, we ask them to write to us.

in an access of heroic weakness (we are all really only human!) made an attempt to save Draeger's products in their entirety for posterity. He had undertaken to conduct the discussion with Draeger in the form of a dialogue, in which he would quote one point at a time from Draeger's letters, reply to it and then lead on to Draeger's next point. When he realised that with this pedantic insistence he was well on the way to writing a new book, his weakness left him, i.e. he surrendered unconditionally and declared that the manuscript was good for nothing. He was however imprudent enough to leave me the manuscript during his last visit (two years ago), and since amongst us everyone is a "leader" and has exactly as much to say as anyone else, he can do nothing when, for the purpose in question, I find useful things in his fragment and quote from it with pleasure.

Draeger: The "movement" is anything but a "real power" which becomes *invincible* if it *wills* to be so, i.e. understands how to apply its organisational result, and which even "has it in its power to show up in practice the intellectual and political impotence of the demagogic minority (i.e. the ruling world powers!-D.)". Query: Why does one see no sign of this "power"? Does the movement perhaps *will* to do nothing? Why does it not make use of its "organisational result"? Answer: the "lack of a united, organised opposition"! (Of all things, "only"! Poor E. Zander!) An "unorganised organisation" thus, and *that* is to be a power? Every power at least presupposes a correspondingly "powerful organisation"!

Zander: One can of course find even a brand-new suit of clothes "in need of patching" provided that one has first burnt holes in it. You make the "rebuttal" easy for yourself: Where I had written: "What stands against you (those opposed to remilitarisation), lives only on the lack of a united, organised opposition", you substitute the word *organisation* for *opposition* and thus produce the nonsense you impute to me: *unorganised* organisation! It is also by no means the case that *every* power at least presupposes a correspondingly powerful organisation. The people, for example, are a force, which often enough, quite unorganised, spontaneously, even against the will of the "leadership", have entered the fray and have achieved revolutions, before they *could* organise themselves at all. There are other forces which exist latently or potentially but must be organised in order to be effective or effective to *their full extent*, i.e. they do not *presuppose* an organisation, but—bring it in their train. Where such latent force is lacking, you may organise as much as you will without anybody noticing a shred of "force".

But to come to grips with the matter itself: Wherever there is agitation or political activity with a specific object in view, one speaks of a "movement". If a movement arises through a conflict and people from all layers of the population take part in it, one speaks of a *popular* movement, e.g., of the popular movement against remilitarisation, which spread even into the parliaments and into the very government (Heinemann). About this movement, which arose spontaneously and in which also many *organisations* took part, I said: It is "*a real force and becomes invincible, when it wills to be so, i.e. understands how to apply its organisational result*". It was just a question of a movement which could become effective to the *fullest extent* or *overwhelmingly* only if it understood how to apply its organisational result. For these reasons it is pointless to ask, equipped with your "self-evident" result: "Why does one see no sign of this 'power'?" Might I remind you of the fact that Mr. Adenauer certainly noticed it and fought it with all means at his command, independently even of the application of the organisational result?

Mr. Adenauer and the ruling minority clearly understand more of potential forces than those super-clever people who can neither see the wood for the trees, nor the trees for the wood. Matters stand in fact thus that the *real* force of the movement could at the given stage only make itself "known" in the elections to the *Bundestag*—since it had spontaneously arisen but was not directed towards revolution, it had for the present to manifest itself in a legal and parliamentary fashion. Its organisational result consisted in the foreshadowing of the "polis", which (this is important for certain reasons) I had described as a "cheap" form of organisation, and in the foreshadowing of an electoral association of the various *organisations* and individuals participating in the struggle against remilitarisation. As a matter of fact, the movement in the form of the *Gesamtdeutsche Volkspartei*, the *Frei-Soziale Union*, the Centre bloc, etc., had already begun to bring into being an electoral association and to organise a *unified* opposition; nothing contradicts the assumption that this electoral association could have achieved overwhelming success.

That the leaders of the GVP from the start conducted themselves in a very petty manner, acted with little foresight and finally wrecked the electoral association through their alliance with the Moscow-directed German League, is a different story and says absolutely nothing against the assertion that the movement would have become a real force if it had *willed* to become it. Here precisely everything depended upon this that those in whose hands the *organisation* lay, remained true to their promises and principles. In the first place there was the question which I had emphasized time and again as decisive, the complete independence from East and West which was to be preserved under all circumstances. Just because the fate of the movement in organisational as in political respects depended upon the behaviour of the leadership, I answer your question, "does the movement perhaps will to do nothing", in the affirmative: In the event, the short-sighted, narrow-minded or careerist leaders of the GVP, who had become the decisive factor, *did not will* the movement to become a real and invincible force. It is quite immaterial to me what "grounds" Heinemann, Wessel, Scheu, Bodensteiner etc., put forward or make up for their behaviour; through their arbitrary negotiations with the German League, they took their own organisation by surprise, manoeuvred the opposition into a dead end and thus ruined the movement. They are no different from people who squander a large capital by foolhardy speculation instead of investing it productively. And it stands no better with those who, like yourself, little recked about the organisational result of the movement, but with an air of profundity speculated in the empty air about "force" or "organisation". Where you find the flop "self-evident" and cry "poor Zander", there stands in reality the question: What have Mr. Draeger and many others contributed, apart from good resolutions and wise speeches, in order to make full use of the organisational result of the movement about which we are discussing?

Draeger: In order to "discuss practical steps", it is proposed "first of all to approach all other organisations, individuals and groups". (Thus there is as yet no "organisational result"!) Now that has been done in Germany a long time ago by founding the "German Congress" in Frankfurt-on-Main on the 17th and 18th March, 1951. All the groups you mention in the campaign—and many more besides—were represented at the Congress; most of the names you mention can be found as "Council Members" (33 members). (This at the same time answers the question about representation: Arp and H. Ch.

Meyer *are* or rather *were* members of the Council, Arp even belonged to its "Managing Committee".) But what do you expect? In western Germany, every organisation, even every attempt at one, is being infiltrated from both sides—from East and West—in order to "neutralise" every grouping, that is, to make it conform to East or West, or else to *paralyze it*. And even though the only result of the Congress was the *questionable* "inter-German Agreement to avoid a fratricidal war", or rather only a *draft* for it which "keeps the door to remilitarisation—wide open" (reason: thesis of the "secret business community")—that is to say, even though the result was only a scrap of paper, there is *no* reason for rejecting *everything* which the "Social-Democratic Opposition (Arp-Meyer)" has to say otherwise about the *methods* of the West. They just tell the truth about *each other*; one can read, on the other hand, in the West about the East in the "undisguised western agency press", and thus the "East-West business community" works admirably. No reason really for Zander to get so excited *against* the "Social-Democratic Opposition" which only confirms *his own* thesis. For the rest, the "contemporary issues" are considerably more *complicated* than Zander usually imagines or sets out. However, in order to go about that into *details*, it would be necessary to paint an "alternative picture", and for that there is here no space. To express it shortly in *one* sentence: It would at any rate be *thinkable* that all these tendencies, groupings, etc. *actually* honestly want the "independence of Central Europe (Germany)" but that—since they cannot realise it(!) in consequence of their "organisational impotence"—they are trying to *join* one of the existing power groupings (as, incidentally, do the Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic as well) with the *intention*, first of attaining their *immediate* aims *together* with these powers and later of achieving their "independence" as a remote aim *against* these powers. This, for the East, equals Titoism, for the West, European nationalism. Naturally, this is a "dangerous" tactical game the outcome of which is by no means certain (in Zander's view the outcome is probably *beyond doubt*, but the future is always "open"!).

Zander: You have here produced some very tangled skeins, but I shall attempt to unravel them. It is, I think, a bad thing if anyone criticises a book without even taking into account what it deals with. As I have said, the organisational result of the campaign was for me at least the *foreshadowing of an electoral association*, and in that sense I wrote in conclusion: "For us the great working association, which can unmask the monopolistic parties as isolated minority apparatuses, is only another(!) result of the movement—it is now necessary to present it to the public formally as a 'working and electoral association against remilitarisation and the Paris agreement' and to deliberate about the practical(!) steps. Those organisations which promoted or proposed the amalgamation, will find it as easy as we do to share in the organisational work (for the elections, that is!) and to approach all the other(!) organisations, individuals and groups".

Whether in the form of the "German Congress" or in the form of a demand for amalgamation put forward by many organisations, the electoral association was factually to hand and it was precisely a question (as the *Frei-Soziale Union* put it) of *making the word, deed*. If one tears off a few fragments from the context and ignores precisely the *practical* question of *organising the election struggle*, it is easy to say: "Now that has been done in Germany a long time ago by founding the German Congress". No, dear friend, nothing had been done—the German Congress failed lamentably in

practical respects and vanished from the picture unhonoured and unsung whereas it would have been its task to take *action*. Always the same wretched spectacle: fiery declarations, vigorous assurances, enthusiastic words and solemn oaths of a "leadership" highly convinced of its own importance, which then "throws up the sponge", i.e. capitulates without a struggle, lets the matter drop and asks in a "superior" manner: "But what do you expect?" Hell, we "expect" something very simple—we have expected from all organisations and individuals who declared they were against the East and West, that they carry out their self-evident duty! This duty consisted in behaving in conformity with declarations, principles, assurances and oaths, and not, for instance, in first proclaiming "independence" and then on "tactical" grounds—practising treachery. Many have resisted all eastern enticements, and have proved themselves materially and spiritually incorruptible, but the bulk of the "leadership" that came forward so noisily consisted of loud-mouthed individuals, egoists in organisational matters, bureaucrats, and people who, like Heinemann-Wessel-Scheu-Bodensteiner and others, took "fright at their own courage", and allowed the Stalinists at the last minute to wreck the electoral association and therewith the whole movement.

Time and again I warned of the great danger constituted by the Stalinists and in particular urgently advised that the movement should in no way allow itself to become confused through the question of the "reunification of Germany" and led away from the matter in hand (the immediate struggle against remilitarisation in Western Germany). You, Mr. Draeger, have either not understood a word of my arguments on this point, or you ignore them *intentionally*. It cannot even be classed as a bad joke when you assert that there is no reason for me to get so excited because Arp-Meier's Social-Democratic Opposition was only a confirmation of my thesis of the "East-West business community". How often have I to explain, firstly, that the *people* have no part in this business community of the *ruling minorities*, and secondly, that the movement against remilitarisation in its genuine form (independent of East and West) was directed *against* this business community! When Arp-Meier took part in the movement and, by their incredible nonsense, created confusion in it (*actually* diverted the movement from its cause to the benefit of Stalinism), then they had to be criticised like anybody else and like the West itself. The "Inter-German Agreement" (as well as the rest of Arp-Meier's production) was not only a scrap of paper but, as I had expressly stated, a *noxious* document, but that did by no means cause me to "reject *everything*" once said by Arp-Meier "about the methods of the West". In this connection, I had only called attention to Arp-Meier's *one-sidedness* because they fumed and raged against the West but did not utter a single word of criticism against the East—on the contrary, they *defended* it in every respect. Because it was necessary to make the movement immune against the Stalinist poison and to attempt to strengthen the "sound core" of the "German Congress", I wrote:

Once more let us remember that Arp-Meier did not have a single word to object to the clique which acted in complete dependence on Stalin's NKVD "plan" which, against our will (namely, against the will of the people which was never consulted) has gone over not to "lead us towards" but simply to *subject* us to Stalin's desire for militarisation. The German Congress declares, with undoubted justification, that the *majority* of the people demand, independently of the unification of Germany, *disarmament* and *demilitarisation* in all occupation zones of Germany to be either *maintained* (western Germany) or *effected* (Stalin-Germany). *This is the central demand on which everything else depends*—one reason more for Arp-Meier to divert attention from it and to cover it up with

their insipid "Inter-German Agreement" which completely coincides with the wishes of the "sun of the peoples" to nip in the bud every wholesome movement.

Behind that *central demand* from which everything depends, there is more than is good for your argumentation: basing themselves upon the *majority* of the people, the German Congress and all other participants of the campaign should have concentrated everything on this demand and should have grouped the whole election campaign around it. Whether or not the movement would thereby have become a *decisive power*, may be left undecided in this connection—I only repeat the lamentable fact that all these noble "leaders" who had put themselves forward as speakers for the *majority* of the *people* and, in its name, had announced the "most resolute" resistance to the remilitarisation against *both sides*, stand revealed as knights of the woeful figure, as incurable confusionists and even as plain traitors in so far as they have stooped to *your arguments* and have, *in contradiction to their own declarations*, allied themselves with one of the existing power groupings. Could you explain to us what earthly good the people could derive from your "clever" idea it would be at any rate "thinkable" that all these tendencies, groupings etc. "actually honestly" wanted the independence of central Europe (Germany), "but" that they then put themselves, no matter for what "reasons", in the most abject dependence? "Honesty" is usually being dragged in when excuses have to be found for a treachery which previously had been quite "unthinkable"—but the people, with its uncorrupted instinct, does not care what its loudspeakers "thinkably" honestly *want*, but what they "actually" honestly *do*. If previously one has based oneself upon the majority of the people, has promised strict independence and relentless struggle, and if one then afterwards makes a somersault in one way or another, then one is, *honestly speaking*, either an empty-headed, irresponsible braggart or a political scoundrel. I don't know which of the two is worse, but I do know that "organisational impotence" is no excuse. If they feel impotent, why shout so loudly as to make even the Himalayas tremble? Honest people, my friend, try to *become* a force (including organisationally) but they do not give up the struggle at the very moment when it starts in earnest and *might* be successful. In the given circumstances, the struggle for the composition of the new *Bundestag* had to be conducted with energy, and that at first not for the independence of central Europe (Germany) (as you say confusedly and having lost sight of the cause) but for the rejection of remilitarisation independently of West and East.

It is positively crazy to try instead to *join one* of the existing power groupings (as incidentally, and that is wonderful, the Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic do as well), with the *intention*, first of attaining their immediate aims *together* with these powers and later of achieving their "independence" as a remote aim *against* these powers. Let us forget about that lovely remote aim: for the East, Titoism (God beware!)—for the West, European nationalism (!); I can assure you that the outcome of your "tactical" game is in truth quite certain and beyond doubt and that the only thing which may be "open" in the future will be the mouth of the astonished "tactician". In the first instance, the whole struggle about remilitarisation arose from the fact that the Federal Republic and the so-called German Democratic Republic not only tried to join one of the existing power groupings, but have been from the very beginning and from top to toe, artificial creations and even common creations of these power groupings (that is the real business community of the "opponents"). In every

case, it was just this "joining" against which all tendencies, groupings etc. with whom our discussion is concerned, had protested with great eloquence in the name of the majority of the people, demanding independence of *both* sides. And what are now these braggarts doing who play your "tactical" little game? I don't mind telling it you yet a few times more: At the very moment when they had to stand the test, in the name of the majority, and when they *could* have become a real force, they suddenly feel their "organisational impotence" and join one of the powers whose aims—both immediate and remote—they previously opposed, and this with the "intention" of realising *together* with these powers—of all things—their *immediate* aims. I ask you honestly, Mr. Draeger: What are these "tacticians"—idiots or frauds? I don't care either way, only you must not imagine that the joining makes them less impotent politically or organisationally than they were before. On the contrary, they have only increased the forces of the enemy and have removed obstacles which previously (no matter whether with or without hope of success) stood in his way. To be sure, those who by means of joining got themselves jobs, may now personally feel "powerful" because they participate, actively or as parasites, in the *existing* power, but as far as their *own* policies are concerned, they are dead and cannot undertake a single serious attack without at once losing what they achieved by joining and feeling once more organisationally impotent. To me, it is by no means accidental that you, Mr. Draeger, do not say *what* are the immediate aims which your "honest" tacticians intend to achieve *together* with the existing powers. The reason is quite simple: the *existing* powers will achieve the immediate aims of the *existing* powers, while the impotent ones give up their own aims and only cover the rear of these powers, particularly in cases when they have *personal* advantages or obtain some petty concessions without importance. Everything else, Mr. Draeger, remains fraud or self-deception, not least the "remote aim" of "independence" to be achieved "later" by the impotent ones *against* the powers. What some "leaders" imagine beggars description, but more astonishing than anything else is their desire to help push a waggon which (provided the opposition really remains impotent) would automatically continue to run in the direction it has taken. If one is impotent for the moment, why not guard one's independence and prepare for the future? Have perhaps the old Social-Democrats, the trades-unions, the Jesuits etc., become a force "over night", or do they not owe their forcefulness just to the fact that they started off by asserting their independence? All our misery consists in this, that with the disintegration of the workers' movement, it has become the fashion to "get in at any price"—it is positively embarrassing that I have to remind you of the effects this fashion has had upon the attaining of both immediate and remote aims by our dear Social-Democracy. *In so far as the eagerly joining Messrs. tacticians are concerned*, I can tell you exactly what will be the certain and undoubted result of your game, namely, the same as that of the game played by the Social-Democratic and Stalinist parties—*militarism, fascism and Russian barbarism*.

I am not going to investigate some other "immediate" aims of those in power and of their voluntary and involuntary helpers, but it is certain that, contrary to your opinion, only those organisations are being "infiltrated" by East or West which are in a rotten state from the start or which, for "tactical" reasons, *permit* themselves to be infiltrated. The best example is the G.V.P. which was immune to infiltration and a thorn in the side of both camps as long as it stood by its foundation principles. But as soon as

this party began to seek success in "election tactics" instead of in politics, it had become infiltrated and condemned to ambiguousness, insincerity and political impotence.

Finally, nothing can be more false than your assertion that East and West merely tell the truth "about each other" and that (as in Arp-Meier about the West), one can read about the East in the "undisguised western agency press". No, dear Mr. Draeger, the East-West business community does *not* work in this way, but it works "admirably" in that both parties are *lying* and each is very careful not to reveal the secret of the business community. What Arp-Meier and other tacticians are telling are, in the best of cases, half-truths, and half-truths are worse than complete lies. Thus I happen to know that Meier approved and defended the G.V.P.'s sell-out to the Stalinists whereas the truth was this: Both Adenauer and the Stalinists have attained what they wanted by the alliance of the G.V.P. with the German League, namely the complete disintegration of the movement against remilitarisation, the ruin of the *independent* opposition. In vain, Mr. Draeger, will you look in the press of East and West for the admission that Adenauer's position has improved with every Russian "offer" and that a great victory has been secured for him both by the attitude of the Social-Democrats and by the election alliance which the G.V.P. concluded with the Stalinist German League. You just cannot tell the truth if you have "joined" a master who forbids a truthful description of the effects his policies have upon the other master, as this could be a warning to the subjects of both masters.

Thus far, but no further will we go with the dialogue Draeger-Zander—it will by now have become clear why it was impossible to follow Draeger through the whole of his maze and clear up, in every detail, the confusion he had created. It only remains to say a few words about the question of organisation which, in this connection, is the main issue. Besides, or together with Kögler, Draeger claims to have already solved the organisational problem in the sense of our ideas. His relevant paragraph reads *verbatim*:

On the question of *popular movements* (No. 11, p. 164 and foll., No. 12/13, p. 275, 299): You are in error when you say that not a single group or tendency has tackled "the organisational problem... in the situation (!) of the entirely changed conditions". [a fine way of 'quoting'! P. B.] '*Sammlung zur Tat*' is an attempt of this kind as you may have envisaged it as the 'Great Utopia'. In the technique of its organisation, S.z.T. is a *movement* which permanently abolishes itself as a *party*, i.e. it *is* and is not a party (p. 164); in other words, it is a synthesis of *party* and *non-party*. At any rate an attempt towards it! The thing, however, has so far *not worked*. In my opinion just because of the "financial question" which was by no means put at the beginning but which proved—inoperable. (How can one get things moving? Everything costs money, nobody is willing to give! Each expects everything from the others. You should try doing something over here, that would be an eye-opener to you!)

It is exactly like Kögler—the same mixing up of *movement* and *party* (organisation), the same confusion, the same belief that all you need to do is to give your business the right "technique of organisation". That calls itself "*Sammlung zur Tat*" (Assembly for Action) and naively tells us that the thing hasn't worked as yet—because of the financial question. But that shows that this question did stand at the beginning, or even before the beginning, as befits a grouplet with only a fraction of an idea which it does not even understand. The fact that they sit in Germany where everything is so "difficult" is no valid excuse for these people. Things are difficult everywhere, and if we had had anything to do with Draeger's "technique of

organisation", the lack of finances would have opened our eyes as wide as it did his.

AN ANSWER THAT IS NO ANSWER

But Draeger is not the only one to play this geographical trump card. The same does Hermann Gall who wrote in "*Neues Beginnen*" (No. 1/1953) an "Answer to *Dinge der Zeit*". In the "Campaign", Zander had mentioned an article in "*Neues Beginnen*" in which Gall complained about "the passivity on the part of the workers which is so much to be regretted". To this, Zander made the comment: "The workers are by no means 'passive', they merely lack *organisation* ... It is the task of the many oppositional groups and organisations to put an organisation in the sense suggested by us at the disposal of the workers for their passionate protest against remilitarisation. Dear friends, approach all organisation with a view to forming a working community against remilitarisation, and you will find the workers in the field."

This, however, Gall does not tell his readers, but speaks only in general of "critical remarks which are partly correct". Well, let that pass! Does he at least say in what the criticism is correct and in what it is not? Unfortunately, he does not get round to doing that,—and that is why the answer he promised in the title of his article is no real answer—because he feels the irresistible urge to deal at length with what he himself calls a well-known fact. He thinks of our remoteness from the scene of events to which he generously attributes a positive side: "It gives one a more unhindered outlook towards a principled assessment and lessens the danger of scattering efforts and forces. Against this, there is a disadvantage—namely, it may happen that one's judgment is too abstract, and that one does not give sufficient attention to imponderables which, in the final analysis, can be decisive for success or failure of an action."

The moral of this imponderable super-cleverness is obvious: Folks, do not be led astray by siren songs which come from far away—for instance, from London. For if you were, you might run the danger of arriving, by means of a principled assessment, at a correct practice—and if that should befall, where would be our imponderables which always yield such convincing reasons why it might have worked, but didn't, and which are always so handy when, after having scattered efforts and forces, one wants to saddle the workers or the entire people with one's own mistakes. In the present case, for instance, the super-clever Gall expounds that "discontent, however great, is not necessarily identical with active preparedness for deeds." This is an accurate description of his own active unpreparedness for deeds, because he could not prevail upon himself to go beyond his own little business even to contact others with a view to forming a working community. By way of compensation, he has found a reason for inactivity in the form of a question which may well be called the acme of super-cleverness: "Is it enough if, for a limited task like remilitarisation [not by accident does Gall confuse the *prevention* of remilitarisation with remilitarisation!], be it ever so urgent, one collects forces with which one can do nothing for more far-reaching tasks? For we must put the question, what is to happen when one task has been dealt with?" For this, he ought to be decorated with the medal of super-cleverness with three bars, and to be forced to shout from the housetops what important task his inveterate unimportance proposes "to deal with", or anyway to try to deal with—namely: "... while making allowances for intellectual capacity, to loosen up the attitude—cramped through no fault of their own—of the working class, the most essential part of the under-

privileged population, to such a degree that the workers are enabled to watch their so-called (!) leaders and thereby to develop a genuine preparedness for action."

The people are saddled with countless small megalomaniacs like that who make claims to educate and to lead, who copy the big swindling concerns and, "while making allowances for intellectual capacity", pen shattering sentences which not by accident fail to specify *whose* intellectual capacity is meant. Obviously, this is exclusively the intellectual capacity of Gall, the "leader" *sans phrase* who has thoroughly "watched" the "so-called" leaders and thereby (always making allowances for his intellectual capacity) developed a *genuine* preparedness (!) for action. This goes under the title of "*Neues Beginnen*" (new beginning). All right, let us begin with a new beginning—what is then the most urgent task? It is to enable the people to watch their new leader Gall and his intellectual capacity and "thereby" to develop the preparedness to honour all Galls for their arrogant and illiterate ravings with a kick in the pants. Nobody shall stop us from dealing with that task, be it ever so urgent. Whether, after dealing with said task, "one" will be able to do anything with all the Galls for more far-reaching tasks—that is a question which we do not even bother to pose, for from watching them, our intellectual capacity has already learned that they can only be regarded as examples of how not to do it. But what is to happen when one task has been dealt with? "New Beginning" which does not begin but only ends in the old miserable way, may find it beyond its capacity of understanding, but we are so "loosened up" that we shall simply begin dealing with the next task, be it, again, ever so urgent.

THE UPSHOT

Meanwhile, the workers (who, as participants in the campaign against remilitarisation, are included in the forces with which Gall can do nothing either before or after remilitarisation) are searching, like others, for an adequate organisation. Hundreds offer themselves, old shopkeepers and new shopkeepers, all firmly convinced that they could run their shops in the right way if only they had the "means" to capture the other shops' customers. The people, so they say all alike, is invincible *if it wills*; and whereas the old-established organisations still do a thriving business with such-like declarations, because they have money and power, the "new" organisations do very badly indeed because they worry about the intellectual capacity of the people, though only the people was the cause which set their jaws in motion. It has taken the united world forces of reaction four years to overcome all obstacles in the way of German remilitarisation (it seems at least at present as if Washington and Bonn had reached their goal). How did the "friends of the people" use this precious time? As you would expect from small shopkeepers: After having got intoxicated with the wonderful vistas opened up by the elementary movement of the people, they fell victim to a terrible hangover from which they still suffer today. But sooner or later, the unsolved problems will come again on the agenda, and the people will once more feel the need for an organisation which can measure up to those problems. That grandiloquent self-appointed "leaders" have led it by the nose in its struggle against remilitarisation and, on top of that, have heaped abuse on it as well—that is a lesson which the people will not forget and which, therefore, can be counted as a positive result of the campaign.

Leslie Woolf Hedley

FASCISM & MODERN AMERICAN POETRY

"...the public is never well enough informed
to have the right to an opinion."

T. S. Eliot

IN an essay of this sort I don't think it would be possible to cover the widespread & complex ramifications of the ultraconservatism so much a part of American poetry today. Such a definitive plan would call for a several volume study consisting of social, economic, philosophical behaviorism of the American people beginning with World War II. This extreme conservatism has produced a criticism—poetry that is both bigoted & intolerant. Bigotry & intolerance lead toward fascism—red, black, brown or *pure* (sterilized) white. No doubt involved studies will be made years from now when this present kind of fascism has been dissolved and its poets forgotten, but very little has been written at this time about the totalitarianism prominent in American letters. I must discount a large portion of Robert Hillyer's articles in the *Saturday Review* (June, 1949) because this was hardly an objective study. Hillyer went against one extreme by going to another extreme that was already outmoded. It may be, as a friend recently suggested, that Hillyer took exception to the award of the Bollingen Prize for Poetry to Ezra Pound chiefly on the grounds that Pound didn't use rimed iambic pentameter! If this is so, Pound's fascism, which is the core of his work, is then reduced to a secondary matter. But I think the philosophy of his work is of primary importance, therefore I intend to explore some directions of this fascist philosophy.

Fascism is a centralized system of rule (or government) exercising absolute control. It's usually extremely nationalistic and imposes strict censorship. It also suppresses all radical opposition desiring change. (If this also describes Stalinist Communism, the description fits. The difference between the two is not in method but in the actual operatives. The Marxist usually was from another strata of society. He poses as a reaction to middle & upperclass fascism. I discuss this similarity later in this essay). Fascism, in reality, is the ultimate of preserving and enlarging the *status quo*. This *status quo* takes hold of politics, philosophy, religion, industry & the arts. In doing this fascism builds up a whole new myth of tradition—and tradition has always been the enemy of the artist. Fascism, unlike older theories of *status quo*, is an aggressive force. This movement, this agitation sometimes, as in the case of Ezra Pound, gives the semblance of an advanced idea. But the basic idea of fascism isn't new. It existed in classic Rome. At the time Pound propagandized it (from Italy) fascism was readapted for modern industrialized society. The inexperienced & naive young men attracted to Pound's idea of modern fascism are almost exclusively members of the middleclass and disinterested students of human history. Youth has always desired the excitement of revolt. What Pound suggested wasn't a revolution, but a *counter-revolution*, a revolt against progress, against the burden of freedom. Youth dignifies Pound's philosophy to mean a crusaderlike gallantry, an aristocratic knighthood of elite intellectual poets that stands above ordinary human

beings. The neofascist poets tried to find a refuge behind a curtain of neoaristocratic art. They were going to fracture language and use it like a Roman fasces, leading the people to clean out The Temple of Art. These writers put the lights out & whistled in the darkness they helped make.

There are numerous weaknesses in their argument, and they are, indeed, lousy students of history. But the major weakness in Pound, aside from his irrational egoism, was in trying to make his poetry into a political force for The Axis against all those people that he personally disliked. (Is it just a coincidence that Pound's imitators all practise sneering & smearing as a group campaign against anyone contrary to their view, sounding like Westbrook Pegler at his foulest? So much noisy viciousness emanates from several small poetry groups that the resemblance to stormtrooper activity is striking.) Pound developed a new art of hate. He unleashed poetry full of political and racial invective, spiced with the aristocratic failures of Italian history. It was bad politics and it made a bad art. It was an art that believed in chains, while true art is a free force breaking all boundaries of human law. Free art grows. Fascism is a denial of growth & an admission of defeat.

Ezra Pound's failure as a creative artist may be summed up in his own words, when he said that many writers fail not from lack of intelligence necessarily, but from lack of character. Pound's lack of character was his retreat into the Slave State. He surrendered man, and in doing so also surrendered poetry.

The fascism present in American poetry started out as criticism, but sooner or later all literary criticism becomes social criticism, and sometimes a social force. It wasn't Pound who first formulated fascist criticism over art, over man. Before him came Paul Elmer More & Irving Babbitt, dogmatic traditionalists, lovers of State & Property, & T. E. Hulme who enjoyed saying man is depraved, that human beings & their creations can't be perfected. Of the three, Hulme's influence seems more important today. He believed that poetry can feed on itself, and that—as Ransom has later echoed—there is nothing so common as progress. Hulme's narrow concept of art feeding on itself in a cannibalistic orgy of egoism, makes itself known today in the poetasting of the very minor Organic Group. Any art solely concerned with itself & having no relationship with the outside world is an art slowly masturbating itself to a bigoted death. While Hulme's own poetry is lifeless and hardly read today, his philosophism lingers and links itself to the maze of ideas of T. S. Eliot.

Eliot, the most publicized figure in modern poetry, although he's written very little poetry in his almost 50 adult years, was always attracted to a defender of fascist causes. If you wish to remove the layer of obscurantism hiding the essence of his work you find anillogical argument for a reactionary and strictly formal society. Eliot manages to mix a (saleable) cocktail of modified catholicism, blended with antiliberalism & polite antisemitism, plus the usual class hatred evident in all the neoaristocratic schools. Men like Eliot have always been afraid of the heterogeneous world of man. Their own feeling of inferiority causes them to band together in protective groups—whether that group label itself Church or State or Cult. They don't try to solve the real problems confronting humanity, but only to justify their own lack of humanity. Uniformity, to them, becomes an answer, when it's actually a death. Men can seek refuge in various ways. They can escape into a wonderland of dreams, as Bohemia offers. They can entertain a gospel of conceit which deludes them into thinking they're something unique, as the

neoristocrats offer. Both of these refuges, as most refuges, fall apart at the slightest touch of simple fact. Eliot juggles these fancies and tries to prove his new aristocratic coterie is the only enduring creative class. Poetry, he says, is too good for ordinary people. Eliot further tries to replace problems—problems with which he never really comes to grips—with this drug of neoristocratic false values. Eliot's fascism isn't very brave and it forces him to dodge & roll into one corner after another. He never could escape from his outright sympathy with fascism—no matter what new name or ambiguity he tried to install. One of Eliot's great heroes, Charles Maurras, a French critic & politician & leader of Monarchist & *Action Française* movements, & later sentenced to life imprisonment, once declared "there is only hate", and proceeded to aid this hate when he (Maurras) fought against the Weimar Republic, then became a collaborator of Hitler & attempted the assassination of Leon Blum. Eliot admired Maurras, as Eliot admired the English fascist novelist Wyndham Lewis, & Ezra Pound, while the latter was preaching against "Jew York". The thing Eliot lacked that both Maurras & Pound had was the courage to come out and admit he was a fascist. Eliot, to this day, has never refuted his admiration of the rise of Mussolini, the Nazi Party & the English Blackshirts.

It's true, we all make mistakes in judgment. Wasn't it old George Bernard Shaw who once pleaded: "Give Hitler a chance!"? Some men, of course, grow & wipe out their past errors. Eliot never did change. He still is a fascist. He had recently entered a new field, trying to formulate a sort of Protestant Psychoanalysis—explication of the mind, so to speak—but whether or not he's succeeded is something only he himself might guess. Twenty different critics explicated Eliot's explication twenty different ways. Eliot's shifty ambiguity leaves William Empson, that eminent unraveler of ambiguities, trailing far behind like an aborigine tracking a chameleon. This wilful obscurantism on Eliot's part is partner to his contempt for people.

Well versed in the ideas of Hulme & Eliot, John Crowe Ransom, formerly of Sewanee but now Professor at Kenyon, arose as a new leader on the scene, after he had been writing criticism & a small amount of minor poetry for some years. His, however, was a new approach to this separation of art from society. Ransom's critical theory explained that the only place European culture was being maintained was in the Southern states of the United States. He then founded a new critical tradition in the South, against industrialization & the machine—against the 20th century—with Allen Tate riding along. Tate, not coincidentally, is also a teacher who, writing a great deal of criticism, is known as a poet. Ransom once stated in his book "The World's Body", that the university teachers should take over criticism, and he then stood on his rhetorical balcony, *à la* Il Duce, asking for "a Criticism, Inc., or Criticism, Ltd." He added, rather unnecessarily, that it must be "collective". Naturally—all totalitarianisms are collective. The Templars of this Crusade were to be poetteachers. Their intention was to put most of the teachings of Hulme, Pound, Eliot, Ransom & Tate into actual practice. They couldn't put anything into practice unless they had the power to act. This power came to them some years later, and The New Criticism seized control of American letters.

When the New Critics first entered the scene they *professed* a valid purpose. They said they were going to bring some order to the disorder of criticism. Instead they proceeded to give us a New Order in the slambang manner of Hitler's New Order which, like his, soon became a New Chaos. They took

criticism apart all right, but they also took poetry apart. They practically killed poetry in order to save it. Save it from what? Save it from life or save it from Marxism? In bringing about this New Order of theirs they launched an attack, not just against outmoded critical theories, but against all humanistic & objectivistic doctrines that had preceded them. These crises of criticism were fought as a running fight from about 1931 until 1945. Mainly this conflict raged between the Marxist critic & The New Critic. Both sides wished to dominate the creative arts, to subordinate all the arts. It was a fight for power.

History proves, if it proves nothing else, that extremes always meet and begin to resemble each other. Marxist teachers & literati, during this period of conflict & change, were enjoying a short moment of both glory & power in the literary sun. They heralded a proletarian revolution in the vehicle of art. The Marxist critic & writer had to be more than just an artist, he had to be an authority on society. The good Marxist, it was felt, automatically became the good critic. (Today the New Critic tells us that the good Ph. D. automatically makes the good poetteacher.) The New Critic had adoration for the past, while the Marxist had contempt for the past. The Marxist felt that what served The Cause of the Marxist-Stalinist Revolution was good art. The question that constantly floored these pundits was "What furthered The Cause?" This led them into laughable & tragic channels of doctrine they never quite unraveled. While this attempt at patchwork reasoning was going on, it wasn't surprising that the middleclass New Critic—for example Kenneth Burke at the American Writers Conference—allied himself to the proletarian Marxist critics because they both were against capitalism as it existed in the 30's—for very different reasons. They formed a kind of Popular Front against the old *Status Quo*. What both dogmas were trying to do was to establish a single standard of criticism capable of evaluating all literature, past & present. One group attacked the problem on the technical level, while the other dealt with the social level. The New Critic made a career of technique: the poem as a thing apart, which led them into formalism—method rather than meaning. The Marxist (& certain humanist) critics made a career out of the struggles of the working class, incorporating that as the sole subject matter, which led them into another kind of formalism—meaning rather than method. Both are an oversimplification and lead to disaster.

Part of this disaster showed itself in what both sides claimed to be a scientific method of criticism. One was a so-called science of social history, the other a so-called science of aesthetics—both speaking dangerous halftruths. Neither group used logic to arrive at their critical view. Aesthetics, if properly understood, is supposed to embrace all the creative forces at play. Aesthetics is a most risky science. No explanation will ever describe the beautiful object. If we can't define beauty we can at least attempt to appreciate & understand it. The first step toward any science of aesthetics must be through logic. Without logic we obtain a rather rubbery & imitative substance that is empty of fact—at best only a pseudoscience. This miscalled aesthetics was to be used by the New Critic throughout his career. But the Marxist critics didn't concern themselves with aesthetics because they distrusted the intellectual approach, and certainly couldn't afford to use logic—The Cause overruled it. Both groups therefore developed a farce into some attitude of culture.

On the decline of Marxism in America, the only remaining semi-articulate group was the New Criticism. Not only did this New Criticism appeal to the middleclass of the younger generation, but it had a certain air of authority

behind it as it consisted largely of work by professors. Ransom's dream had certainly been realized.

The heroes of the times changed. The new generation began almost out of thin air, or distilled air. When the Young New Critic trumpeted on the verbal stage he was a man who had, very probably, never read Henry David Thoreau, Thorstein Veblen, Randolph Bourne, Theodore Dreiser, maybe very little of Walt Whitman or Jack London or Sherwood Anderson or Carl Sandburg, never heard of Joe Hill (the radical poet shot by a firing squad in Utah) or Sacco & Vanzetti (as integral a part of American culture as the electric chair), never bothered to read the many schools of liberal, realist, naturalist writing. The young student found himself among a captive audience under the influence of Eliot & Gentleman Scholars who preferred to go back to a period before the Renaissance because, these gentlemen insisted, *nothing of real importance has happened since*. (Even Peter Viereck, although a New Conservative & one of the better antitotalitarian writers to come out of the late war, was so lacking in a background of social philosophy that he actually called *mccarthyism* a kind of midwest anarchism & a product of the Industrial Workers of the World, the I. W. W.!) Instead of trying to assimilate & extend the creative, social, scientific advances of an age that had fought for creative freedom, the new young poets too hastily acclaimed James Joyce & Gertude Stein, Eliot & Pound, Ransom & Tate, André Gide & Jean Paul Sartre, even before they had fully grasped what these diverse writers were driving at. (And I'm convinced that a great many young poets have only touched upon these various writers in the manner of a relay race. The more the young poet jumps from influence to influence, the more confused he becomes.) The new generation didn't know that when the former Advanced Guard became entrenched it turned into an Old Guard—a New Academy. So, as a result of ignorance, the young poets jumped on the weakened "soul" of humanist & individualist literature and tried to beat it into submission. (I must state that I haven't any sympathy for the humanist who never really develops past the navel staring stage, nor have I any illusions about the so-called individualism of American life. One the other hand the horde of zealous New Critics who tried to remove 20 years of creative humanistic endeavor were disregarding all historical context.) The New Critics were tough & hard & had a job waiting in some college overcrowded with students studying on the G. I. Bill. They used a method sung by the SA troops of Hitler: "Be my brother or I'll knock your head in!"

The New Critics happily found that they possessed a captive audience in the university that was more than willing to cooperate. Many poets & teachers, unable to fight the massive tide, carrying along with it an insulting Loyalty Oath—in opposition to which, incidentally, the New Critics never went on record—acquiesced to this pressure. Writers such as Thomas Merton were saying that man was rotten, fit for the gutter—and then they ran into the protective arms of an emasculated holiness. Surely, if mankind was so full of "original sin" as Eliot & Merton preached, such a failure as W. H. Auden anxiously advised, perhaps poetry would be better off without such "human" encumbrances as feeling, experience, adventure, discovery & war? What was war? What did that have to do with poetry? Hadn't critics like Ivor Winters, Cleanth Brooks, I. A. Richards already declared from their Plastic Towers that meaning had nothing to do with poetry and wasn't therefore necessary to it? War? What was war? Aside from the fact that Hulme, the spiritual father of the new tendency, had accidentally been killed in one,

war was beneath the attention of poetry. The meaning of war for the lives of over 2 billion people & the philosophy of war was unimportant!

Youth has the luxury of being blind to many unpleasant realities. The world was full of changing conditions, sparks of conflict and was seemingly exhausted from a gigantic mass murder. This was a generation that had no Wilfred Owen, no Siegfried Sassoon, no E. E. Cummings born out of war. (And if we had had such war poets would it have been likely they would have been published?) We had, instead, a Karl Shapiro who, unable to write an authentic V letter about the war & its impact on human beings, put several quotes formulated by the New Critics together and called it "An Essay On Rime". He was no war poet. He was a man trying to write something that would please the New Critics. That intention on Shapiro's part, plus social backing, helped promote him to the top roost where he is now editor of *Poetry Chicago*, a leading magazine of New Criticism. This large coterie was made up of other middleclass products who got into poetry by the back door. The dainty, the effete, the mentally crippled, the doomsinger, the snobs who embraced the beautiful bombed cities of Europe—3000 safe miles away—who had never seen war any closer than a Greenwich Village bar or an Army Orderly Room, all paraded into this newly designed graveyard. It was a new kind of aloof fascism, on the surface a sublime dream of intellectual aristocratic heaven. It wasn't just, as some validly pointed out, a philosophy of the graveyard but, in my opinion, the *enjoyment* of the graveyard. While people like Shapiro, Randall Jarrell, Delmore Schwartz, Wallace Stevens, Marianne Moore (who thought war was fought to help her conquer her own sickness) and so many young imitators were strolling through the ruins, they were guided, some of the way, by Allen Tate, who told them that literature has nothing to do with life! The world had become a concentration camp, the major cities of European culture that the Southern group had offered lip service to were ashes, over 20 million dead bodies were awaiting registration & burial—while Tate & Co. still lecture the poets on the hierarchy of the poet withdrawn from the common world! Where is the poet's world, then? It can't be among the gaschambers of Germany & Poland, the slave camps of Russia. Poets are immune to common butchery. Tate (I'm informed now a Catholic convert) in his book *Reactionary Essays* & to this very day, believes that the moral wrong of slavery means nothing—I interpret this to mean that the slavery of half the world means nothing—that the only thing of moral importance is inside the textual dexterity of the poem. Here was an obvious flaw in New Criticism, for aside from craftsmanship they insisted on presenting their own view of man & his world in their poetry. And didn't their views have meaning? So meaning was important, after all, *as long as it contained the fundamentals of New Criticism*. Freedom of expression, to the New Critics, meant only the freedom to follow their theories. (Hitler once yelled that anyone who wasn't a member of the Nazi Party was either a fool or an idiot. This, in no small way, parallels the behavior of the New Critic.) Happiness & utopia, the New Critic pledged, came about when analyzing the fibers of the poem.

The fact that men were such cruel children as to believe this ersatz teaching has a strong element of comedy, but the majority of young men initiated into English & Creative Writing classes of the university system were actually falling for this pompous garbage. The university had officially become a substitute for life. It was a celebration of doom & despair—but it was the university's own doom & despair. The New Critics tried to weave

this despair into a skilled poem. They usually said nothing, aside from some imitative echoes, not just because they had very little to say, but because despair is the silence after surrender. They became, ironically, the new "hollow men . . . Leaning together Headpiece filled with straw . . ."

A long time ago Albert Einstein, whose equations are of the most significant & involved nature, remarked about a book: "I couldn't read it; the human mind isn't that complex." (Rest easy, Freud.) A large number of intelligent & experienced men & women have attempted to read the pseudo-intellectual erudition injected into the gibberish of several of our new "poets" and come up with the same conclusion: the human mind isn't that complex but is faking complexity in order to *appear profound*. Fascism may be hidden under many kinds of uniforms & flags, one of which is obscurity. Obscurity often hides not only a tortured inarticulate mind, but possibly secret motivations. When a reader refuses to have on hand 2 volumes of Bulfinch's Mythology, 1 volume of Japanese Noh plays, 3 Etruscan vases, several Thomist tomes, a *Glossary of New Criticism* & Pound's *Cantos* in order to read & enjoy a poem, he's not being "lazy minded" as the New Critics smirk, but is too wise to take part in an esoteric Scrabble calling itself "poetry".

A few people might say that I'm giving a broad, personal opinion in my definition of fascist writing. That's exactly what I intend. What else is criticism if it isn't a personal opinion? It should be known that fascism is not just one specific idea, but a whole chain of ideas seeking each other, belonging together. I think these ideas can be singled out & identified with fascism. Fascist poetry, for example, can be recognized not only by its contempt for people, but by its sick preoccupation with the archaic past. The truly creative mind is never satisfied to remain in one fast position. It constantly wishes to explore unknown realms of ideas. Only a paralyzed mind refuses to budge from the past.

The New Criticism has turned the poet into a craftsman, and there's nothing more superficial than a mere craftsman. He may know all the fanfare & technical doodads that some people identify with poetry, but he can't make a poem into a living thing. This new poet, schooled by traditionalist teachers, under the literary influence of neoclassicist writers, doesn't bother with new ideas or discovery in poetry—ideas are a dangerous thing and can get a guy into trouble—as long as he can write a superultrarefined poetry, *sotto voce*, sterile & tame. It's a poetry produced in a vacuum, untouched by human hands. Who could share in this spiritless poetry? But the New Critics didn't mind. They analyzed & explicated the inexplicable like pedigreed beavers.

I want to state an additional & all important fact: the New Critic knows what political fascism caused throughout the world. He should know the eventual bookburning & censorship his philosophy encourages. *And the only reason any man resorts to violence & censorship is that he fears the truth.* The New Critic should know, if he has one ounce of unregimented intelligence, that once bookburning starts, under any pretext, sooner or later, it will scorch the very men who are tossing books into the fire. *It's only one step from pushing books into a fire to pushing men into a furnace.* The New Critic, in his newly acquired power, doesn't think it will reach that drastic stage. He thinks he's got a new method of censorship that's unbeatable: Don't print any radical books in the first place! You can't burn a book if there's nothing to burn! Who knows what next step the New Critic might take to hold this new power? Did Pound ever object when Hitler & Mussolini

burnt books? Did Pound ever object when Italian antifascist poets were arrested? He didn't protest because he realized that the philosophy of fascism *had to lead to that eventually*. The only way the New Critics can maintain their dogma is by prohibiting the exchange of opposing ideas. Certainly the American New Critics, enamoured of Pound & Eliot's brand of fascism, should be made to realize that they are preparing the way for the imprisonment of all the arts, not only poetry. The magazines carrying the banner of the New Criticism further prove this neofascism. Sometimes they pretend an academic eclecticism that is as meaningless as a rigged jury. There's nothing but a stale, dangerous disease of lifelessness evident in their periodicals. There's no healthy activity, no creative freedom, no originality. Most of the poetry they present reminds me of Hitler's pale wash of painting... Great poetry, since the Norse sagas, since Chaucer, has a universality to it, transcending man—uplifting man. Since the dictatorship of the New Criticism most of the published poetry has lost that universality and instead has shrunken into recondite trivia—microscopic in scope, myopic in view.

I don't want the reader to conclude that I advocate the nonpublishing of fascist or neofascist or modified fascist literature. That would be committing one crime to erase another. Let Eliot's Faber & Faber publish Pound's theories on everything from agriculture to the Roman sewer system. (Certainly Pound's best effort, his Chinese translations, are a major work, perhaps because Pound left his own ideas out and simply *translated*.) Let all the commercial publishing houses back whomever they feel to be the winning horse. The fascist literati have as much right to be heard as the antifascist writers. Unfortunately, you can read several years of the New Critics' magazines and rarely find one questioning wink of their view. I don't condone the peculiar imprisonment of Pound—or, I must add, the several dozen Communists or the several thousand conscientious objectors, all jailed for their opinions. Although I've heard much wailing by the Poundians over their master's incarceration, *never* have these same men publicly spoken one word for the freedom of the conscientious objectors (pacifists) or the Communists. As I've said before, the totalitarian believes only in his own freedom.

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this despair into a skilled poem. They usually said nothing, aside from some imitative echoes, not just because they had very little to say, but because despair is the silence after surrender. They became, ironically, the new "hollow men . . . Leaning together Headpiece filled with straw . . ."

A long time ago Albert Einstein, whose equations are of the most significant & involved nature, remarked about a book: "I couldn't read it; the human mind isn't that complex." (Rest easy, Freud.) A large number of intelligent & experienced men & women have attempted to read the pseudo-intellectual erudition injected into the gibberish of several of our new "poets" and come up with the same conclusion: the human mind isn't that complex but is faking complexity in order to *appear profound*. Fascism may be hidden under many kinds of uniforms & flags, one of which is obscurity. Obscurity often hides not only a tortured inarticulate mind, but possibly secret motivations. When a reader refuses to have on hand 2 volumes of Bulfinch's *Mythology*, 1 volume of Japanese Noh plays, 3 Etruscan vases, several Thomist tomes, a *Glossary of New Criticism* & Pound's *Cantos* in order to read & enjoy a poem, he's not being "lazy minded" as the New Critics smirk, but is too wise to take part in an esoteric Scrabble calling itself "poetry".

A few people might say that I'm giving a broad, personal opinion in my definition of fascist writing. That's exactly what I intend. What else is criticism if it isn't a personal opinion? It should be known that fascism is not just one specific idea, but a whole chain of ideas seeking each other, belonging together. I think these ideas can be singled out & identified with fascism. Fascist poetry, for example, can be recognized not only by its contempt for people, but by its sick preoccupation with the archaic past. The truly creative mind is never satisfied to remain in one fast position. It constantly wishes to explore unknown realms of ideas. Only a paralyzed mind refuses to budge from the past.

The New Criticism has turned the poet into a craftsman, and there's nothing more superficial than a mere craftsman. He may know all the fanfare & technical doodads that some people identify with poetry, but he can't make a poem into a living thing. This new poet, schooled by traditionalist teachers, under the literary influence of neoclassicist writers, doesn't bother with new ideas or discovery in poetry—ideas are a dangerous thing and can get a guy into trouble—as long as he can write a superultra-refined poetry, *sotto voce*, sterile & tame. It's a poetry produced in a vacuum, untouched by human hands. Who could share in this spiritless poetry? But the New Critics didn't mind. They analyzed & explicated the inexplicable like pedigreed beavers.

I want to state an additional & all important fact: the New Critic knows what political fascism caused throughout the world. He should know the eventual bookburning & censorship his philosophy encourages. *And the only reason any man resorts to violence & censorship is that he fears the truth.* The New Critic should know, if he has one ounce of unregimented intelligence, that once bookburning starts, under any pretext, sooner or later, it will scorch the very men who are tossing books into the fire. *It's only one step from pushing books into a fire to pushing men into a furnace.* The New Critic, in his newly acquired power, doesn't think it will reach that drastic stage. He thinks he's got a new method of censorship that's unbeatable: Don't print any radical books in the first place! You can't burn a book if there's nothing to burn! Who knows what next step the New Critic might take to hold this new power? Did Pound ever object when Hitler & Mussolini

burnt books? Did Pound ever object when Italian antifascist poets were arrested? He didn't protest because he realized that the philosophy of fascism *had to lead to that eventually*. The only way the New Critics can maintain their dogma is by prohibiting the exchange of opposing ideas. Certainly the American New Critics, enamoured of Pound & Eliot's brand of fascism, should be made to realize that they are preparing the way for the imprisonment of all the arts, not only poetry. The magazines carrying the banner of the New Criticism further prove this neofascism. Sometimes they pretend an academic eclecticism that is as meaningless as a rigged jury. There's nothing but a stale, dangerous disease of lifelessness evident in their periodicals. There's no healthy activity, no creative freedom, no originality. Most of the poetry they present reminds me of Hitler's pale wash of painting... Great poetry, since the Norse sagas, since Chaucer, has a universality to it, transcending man—uplifting man. Since the dictatorship of the New Criticism most of the published poetry has lost that universality and instead has shrunk into recondite trivia—microscopic in scope, myopic in view.

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labor in fact served human need. For modern civilization, on the other hand, the center of attention is private gain, and human labor is the means of realizing it.

This is the familiar dilemma faced by present-day medievalism: its very ideals are commodities and by their nature have nothing in common with the content of the dream. Complete identification with the past is, of course, impossible, but what we have here is a thoroughly spurious tradition. There is nothing surprising in this discrepancy since it is precisely the function of ruling-class ideology to manufacture glorious historical antecedents in the same fashion as individual members of the ruling class traditionally fabricate glorious personal ancestors.

A particularly glaring instance of false tradition is Mr. Eliot's special reverence for Dante. In his brilliant introduction to *The Portable Dante*, Paolo Milano, unmistakably referring to Eliot and his coterie, writes:

The popular conception of Dante as a "medieval" poet is confusing. It rests either on a misapprehension (England and France were in fact still medieval in Dante's thirteenth century, but Italy no longer was), or on some hasty conclusions—after all, doesn't Dante believe in the Devil, and in scholastic logic, and in absolute monarchy? If we are attentive to Dante's true achievement—his art—we will find him much closer to the Renaissance than to the Middle Ages. Friedrich Engels was not too much off the mark, when, in an address to Italian Socialists, he called Dante the first universal mind of our modern era. Dante's contribution to poetry is parallel to his friend Giotto's in painting. They do not perfect a dying art; they cross the threshold onto a new one. And the cultural temper of their age is well-defined in the term "pre-renaissance".

Dante's peculiar asset as a poet is that of the true beginner who draws strength both from the absolutes of a deep-rooted tradition and from his soundings of the future. No view, therefore, is more dubious than the current one (so tainted with envy, especially when held by writers), that Dante was so good a poet because he could rely innocently on his unshakable Catholic faith. This was by no means Dante's approach to art. It is doubtful that he could even have conceived a fallacy so peculiarly modern and romantic as that which holds that an artist can be favored by a stock of beliefs which for him remain beyond discussion...

Some are ready to erase six centuries of Western history and take shelter under the wings of Catholic orthodoxy and behind the syllogisms of Aquinas, as if allegiance to Dante's Church, or to the frame of his beliefs, could grant them some semblance of his genius. It is a mirage. Those who believe it forget that Dante was a Catholic who enthroned his Beloved in the Empyrean at the side of God, who called the church of his time the Harlot of Kings, and who prepared for a living Pope ("The Prince of the new Pharisees") a seat in Hell. They pass over Dante's genuine reverence for knowledge and science. Praising Dante's exaltation of the Catholic faith, they fail to see that active love of an ideal was to him the closest thing to faith.

We shall have recourse to Milano's essay again. For the present it is sufficient to ask: What exactly does Dante—a man of integrity, honor and courage, a man who accepted the bitterness of life-long exile in preference to easy compromise of principle have to do with a fashionable partisan of reaction like Eliot, who will not even argue his beliefs much less make personal sacrifices for them? Eliot's interest in Dante, then, is no more than just that—an "interest". It is the dilettante's play, that has nothing to do with a living tradition. For the latter is not worshipped or preserved, it is used.

Hedley unfortunately takes the "easy" way out. He writes: "... tradition has always been the enemy of the artist". The rejection of tradition as such is absurd. Is not language itself a social convention? And to follow the rejection of tradition by a tirade against the wilful obscurantism of modern poetry is to compound the absurdity. The essence of the business is that one condition is absolutely dependent on the other: the reason for obscurantism is the lack of tradition—of community of knowledge. Without social conventions there is no shared knowledge—only artistic solipsism—only positivism

in art. Positivism is the notion that an objective world does not exist; that it is only possible to know one's own notion of the universe, never the thing itself. If this is so then community of knowledge is *at best* accidental; certainly it is not a necessary foundation of thought. It is this philosophic idealism which is the *apologia* modern aesthetics would make for modern art. If Hedley sanctions the conditions which produce the wildness, strangeness and incomprehensibility of modern literature he has little right to criticize the product of these conditions.

Hedley would doubtless counterpose individualism or originality to tradition. True individualism, however, requires the contribution of a new element to *what is already there*. If one is unaware of the latter, he will always be grappling with elementary problems long since solved; he will in no wise be individuated, i.e., distinguished from his predecessors. Unable to realize his own uniqueness, the artist will then be truly a slave to tradition. The nature of the opposites, traditional—original, is dialectic: For a tradition to keep alive, originality is required but originality presupposes a thorough knowledge of tradition.

Hedley's off-hand rejection of tradition must have bad consequences. Instead of demonstrating the falsity of the tradition claimed by the New Critics he has *in effect* accepted their pretensions. Should we hand Dante over to Eliot?—This is a crime for which we shall pay in the shallowness and backwardness of our art. It is of a piece with Hedley's identification of Marx with the butchery of Stalinism—and strikingly inconsistent in both cases. In regard to the former instance, Hedley identifies himself with a humanistic tradition, e.g., Thoreau, London in any case. The thinness and exclusively national character of the tradition is no accident; it is the price he pays for his over-all "rejection" of the past—for letting Eliot "keep" Dante. In the same way nature exacts her penalty for the identification of Marx with Stalin, for, it is clear that Hedley's very notion of a connection between poetry and the social structure would not even be thinkable without the pioneer work of a Marx, who once and for all provided a method for studying human society *in general*. And even though Hedley employs this method without giving its innovator credit, he employs it, again, in a very shallow and unsatisfying fashion—because his overhasty "rejection" of it renders him incapable of plumbing the method's depths and fully extracting the riches therein.

Capitalism has a natural tendency to fetichize every position; for this reason tradition and originality appear as exclusive categories. The deeper understanding is that they are interdependent. To be conversant with tradition takes time and care. Nevertheless, or just because of this, it is a short-cut—the only one there is. The mind given to eternal categorizing, steeped in formal logic, is not able to comprehend how a thing which takes time can be a time-saver. This requires dialectical not formal reasoning. Tradition is a short-cut because without it the knowledge of problems resolved would be lost and history would be a treadmill. But though life is big with tradition it is, fortunately, never necessary to know the whole of it, for only a part of the past speaks to any particular age. Thus a new way of seeing in painting, or of feeling in poetry coincides with the repudiation of a part of tradition (usually the one immediately preceding) and an appropriation of some other segment of the past.

The break with tradition as such, is, as we have noted in opposition to Hedley, the usual standard of modernism—and it is one to which Hedley

himself subscribes. Such a rupture is only possible in an age of virtually total social breakdown; when man no longer speaks to man; when individualism, i.e., competition has become so brutal that there is a cessation, in many respects, of social communication. The symptoms of this crisis in communication are innumerable: Semantics, Symbolic Logic, Non-Objective Art and the preoccupation with Symbolism in art, philosophy, sociology and psychology are only the most evident signs of decay in man's universe of discourse. Communication is necessarily symbolic. Why then all the fuss about symbolism in our time? Simply because symbols no longer communicate. But if a symbol ceases to indicate its referent it ceases to be a symbol. And this is why so much of contemporary ideology is literally meaningless. It corresponds to nothing in reality. Can it be otherwise if the existence of reality is denied?

The discarding of tradition is therefore an important moment in the philosophy of modern art; it is part of the repudiation of social values generally. The notion now posited is one of the artist standing outside of or apart from historical processes, without organic connection to past or present, the social or the natural world. The intellectual processes at work are easily demonstrable. Ortega y Gasset's *The Dehumanization of Art* furnishes some juicy example of the new method and spirit. Gasset writes:

If we now invert the natural direction of... [the thinking]... process, if, turning our back on alleged reality, we take the ideas for what they are—mere subjective patterns—and make them live as such, lean and angular but pure and transparent; in short if we deliberately propose to "realize" our ideas—then we have dehumanized and, as it were, derealized them. For ideas are really unreal. To regard them as reality is—let us express it this way—realizing the unreal as such. In this way we do not move from the mind to the world. On the contrary, we give three-dimensional being to mere patterns, we objectify the subjective, we "worldify" the immanent...

We should not be put off by the quotation marks which a trained mind uses to hide illogic, embarrassment or both. Making "mere subjective patterns" "live" (if they are merely subjective how can they live?), investing them with physical properties, realizing "the unreal", giving three-dimensional being to non-being—all of this is exactly as absurd as it sounds. It means: divorce ideas from reality and then claim these ideas *as such* are reality. But what are ideas as such? Nothing. Language itself provides the key. Ideas must be of something. As Gasset himself notes, this is the "natural direction of the thinking process". Try as hard as you wish, you cannot have ideas as such. And to proceed by giving the physical dimensions of ideas as such is about as sensible as giving the measurements of the concept measure, or the weight of the notion weight. Gasset continues:

A traditional painter painting a portrait claims to have got hold of the real person when, in truth and at best, he has set down on the canvas a schematic selection, arbitrarily decided on by his mind, from innumerable traits that make a living person. What if the painter changed his mind and decided to paint not the real person but his own idea, his pattern of the person? Indeed, in that case the portrait would be the truth and nothing but the truth, and failure would no longer be inevitable. In foregoing to emulate reality the painting becomes what it authentically is: an image, an unreality.

Expressionism, cubism, etc. are—in varying degree—attempts at executing this decision. From painting things, the painter has turned to painting ideas. He shuts his eyes to the outer world and concentrates upon the subjective images in his own mind.

In the first sentence Gasset states that the traditional painter claims to paint reality, but actually does not. In the second, Gasset offers as a new departure precisely what, according to him, painting has in fact always done: painted a personal notion of reality rather than the thing itself. The conclusion, therefore, should be that the only new element in modern art is its

claim. How then explain the peculiarity of the work itself? The third sentence begins by asserting that the painting of ideas is truth. Truth to what? Truth to the ideas themselves. But are the ideas true? That is not the point of course—as far as modern art is concerned. For the aim of the latter is truth to ideas rather than ideas of truth. Unfortunately just such a conception has nothing whatever to do with truth, for if it is impossible to test truth objectively or validate it socially anything may be claimed as truth. At that point truth and error become in practice indistinguishable and truth ceases to be. The second clause of the same sentence implies that painting prior to the contemporary mode was inevitably a failure. Such a distortion is too gross to require discussion. All ideas are indeed schematic selections. Nevertheless, in a practical way, we know that they correspond to reality: the scientific idea must work and it must be capable of duplication by others; the artistic "idea" must arouse a social response, because our emotions, language and imagery are just as much a social product as the shirt on our back. The artist's "own idea ... of the person" is therefore as socially conditioned as mine is; hence I respond to it. And if I do not respond to the modern artist's idea, that is largely because he is painting ideas as such—that is, nothing at all. The objectification of mere phantoms, the "realizing of the unreal"—what are these if not fetiches?

Nor is this tendency confined to painting. Gasset writes:

Pirandello's drama is, I dare say, the first "drama of ideas" proper. All the others that bore this name were not dramas of ideas, but dramas among pseudopersons symbolizing ideas. In Pirandello's work, the sad lot of each of the six personages [*Six Characters In Search of an Author*] is a mere pretext and remains shadowy. Instead we witness the real drama of some ideas as such, some subjective phantoms gesticulating in an author's mind.

What exactly is a "real drama of ideas as such"?—Are "subjective [!] phantoms [!]" gesticulating in an author's mind" *real*? Perhaps Gasset and the dreary Pirandello are capable of visualizing ideas as such engaged in dramatic conflict, making love etc. What then are the differences between real and unreal, phantoms and humans? Their *real* relation is one thing—the point here is—how are they distinguished?

Gasset writes:

Art has no right to exist if, content to reproduce reality, it uselessly duplicates it. Its mission is to conjure up imaginary worlds. That can be done only if the artist repudiates reality and by this act places himself above it.

That the artist is not concerned with merely copying reality is one thing; that, as a consequence, he must *repudiate* reality is an entirely different matter. The meaning of artistic imagination was nowhere better stated than by Fielding in one of his fine little prologues in *Tom Jones*:

...by invention is really meant no more (and so the word signifies) than discovery or finding out; or to explain it at large, a quick and sagacious penetration into the true essence of all the objects of our contemplation.

The creative imagination need not fabricate worlds, it is best exercised in penetrating the real world. Even the most fanciful of fairy-tales derive a measure of their charm and point precisely from their crack-brained *image of reality*. Gasset's notions are nothing more than the bitter dregs of romanticism—a romanticism purged of whatever loveliness it may once have possessed. What is meant by repudiating reality and by this act placing oneself "above it". If one *repudiates* reality one can be neither above nor

below it—one is simply nowhere. If one is in a place—above or below—one is somewhere. To be, is, by definition, to be real. On the other hand, one can repudiate phantasies, e.g. we have just repudiated Gasset's phantasy. This means we are now free from or "above" his nonsense. But neither we, Gasset nor Jesus himself can repudiate reality else we repudiate ourselves along with our repudiation.

This investigation has led to a conclusion directly opposite to that of Hedley: lack of tradition in the sense of communication with past and present is an important part of the philosophy to which he objects. The New Criticism constitutes only an apparent exception to this rule. For though it trumpets its traditionalism—the tradition has very little effect on the content of the work of the New Criticism.

II

In several places in his essay Hedley touches upon the essential non-humanism of modern poetry. The observation has been made that this is related to the fact that the social order is fundamentally inhuman. However, so central a problem is this for modern art that it deserves some detailed analysis. The effect of the dehumanization is most clearly evident in the fine (pictorial) arts because the treatment of the life study itself provides a simple, generally reliable indicator. In the above-mentioned essay Ortega y Gasset notes:

It is not an exaggeration to assert that modern paintings and sculpture betray a real loathing of living forms or forms of living beings. The phenomenon becomes particularly clear if the art of the last years is compared with that sublime hour when painting and sculpture emerge from Gothic discipline as from a nightmare and bring forth the abundant, world-wide harvest of the Renaissance. Brush and chisel delight in rendering the exuberant forms of the model—man, animal, or plant. All bodies are welcome, only life with its dynamic power is felt to throb in them. And from paintings and sculpture organic form flows over into ornament. It is the epoch of the cornucopias whose torrential fecundity threatens to flood all space with round, ripe fruits.

Why is it that the round and soft forms of living bodies are repulsive to the present-day artist? Why does he replace them with geometric patterns? For with all the blunders [!] and all the sleights of hand [!] of Cubism, the fact remains that for some time we [?] have been well pleased[?] with a language of pure Euclidean geometry patterns.

This phenomenon becomes more complex when we remember that crazes [!] of this kind have periodically occurred in history. Even in the evolution of prehistoric art we observe that artistic sensibility begins [!] with seeking the living form and then drops it, as though affrighted and nauseated, and resorts to abstract signs, the last residues of cosmic or animal forms. The serpent is stylized into the meander, the sun into the swastika. At times this disgust at living forms, flares up and produces public conflicts. The revolt against the images of Oriental Christianity, the Semitic law forbidding representation of animals—an attitude opposite to the instinct of those people who decorated the cave of Altamira—doubtless originate not only in religious [!] feeling but also in an aesthetic sensibility whose subsequent influence in Byzantine art is clearly discernible.

A thorough investigation of such eruptions of iconoclasm in religion and art would be of high interest. Modern art is obviously actuated by one of these curious iconoclastic urges. It might have chosen for its motto the commandment of Porphyrius which, in its Manichaean adaptation, was so violently opposed by St. Augustine: *Omne corpus fugiendum est*—where *corpus*, to be sure, must be understood as "living body". A curious contrast indeed with Greek culture which at its height was so deeply in love with living forms.

Though the "thorough investigation" called for is obviously beyond the scope of this essay several points are worth noting: Every great period of human history exhibits a love of the human form, or, more generally, of life itself—exhibits it, first of all, in its art. At such times life is fruitful and

full of promise, people are living greatly—to the limit of their capacities—and thoroughly enjoying themselves in the process. And because fortune seems to love man and the fates to smile on him, he comes to prize the image of himself. Periods of stasis and more particularly of decline witness a turning away from living form. Life no longer appears so sweet—*because it is not*; perspectives are narrower and consequently the natural symbols of life, the human form pre-eminently, are disregarded, distorted or both. This is the sense of Gasset's: "... artistic sensibility *begins* with seeking the living form and then drops it..." The latter situation occurs not because the subject itself is exhausted, for theoretically life is virtually inexhaustible and furnishes well-nigh limitless possibilities for reproduction. In any case it can be demonstrated historically that no single artistic school ever exhausted the possibilities of the human form—always a later *great* period was to see and render life in an entirely new way.

When the decline sets in it becomes "impossible" to do great life studies. It is altogether a secondary question whether this is because the artist does not choose to do such studies or because he cannot. The point is that, with rare exceptions, they are not done. If the first surmise is correct and the artist chooses to distort, this already tells much of the mood and taste of the time. To create a work of beauty the painter seems almost required to turn from every bit of life around him. But it becomes progressively less certain that modern artists (barring old-timers like Picasso who were trained in a period when it was still possible to learn their art thoroughly in all its aspects—technical and theoretical) could if they would.

A tentative illustration of the way in which social life and art subtly interpenetrate is in order. Even if one compares the nudes of the last important period of art—French painting of the latter half of the 19th century—to those done in the incontrovertibly greatest era—Renaissance Italy—one immediately notices how great the fall has been. French culture was not yet in decline. It was, rather, in stasis. Take the oft-compared "Olympia" of Manet and Titian's "Venus of Urbina" (1538, Florence, Uffizi). The composition and subject-matter are similar—but what a world of difference! Titian's is obviously a work of beauty; Manet has, at best, presented us with a highly-skilled document. It may be objected that *that* was precisely Manet's object (though the title of the work, as some critics have noted, indicates, rather, a desire to idealize the harlot). But the result is what counts. And the result is that Titian painted the masterpiece, and, Manet was, in this instance, a victim of Positivism's artistic offspring, Naturalism.¹

So much for dehumanization in the pictorial arts. What of literature? Here the dehumanization is implicit in the form and explicit in much of the doctrine. As concerns the first it is necessary to grasp the notion that *human*

¹ To be sure much that is lovely and of permanent value came out of the later period. Renoir exemplifies the artist who could produce the beautiful. But the man has, undeniably, a one-sided genius; his vision was limited to the sweetness of life; for its other human qualities, e.g., nobility, he had no sense. But then France was no longer producing many true noblemen. So that while Renoir's women are a great achievement they are his only achievement.

Impressionism and the other currents of the time reflected a France imbued with the softness, the sweetness, the languor of her twilight hour. Impressionism perfectly renders the half-misty, vaguely agreeable, slightly melancholy and reminiscent atmosphere of a moment in French history which was pleasant if not great, a moment when the contradictions were blurred and fuzzy rather than sharp. The sunlight had not yet disappeared but night was soon to fall on France and, indeed, on all of Western civilization.

language is, in origin and nature, a thoroughly social product. Animals communicate but their language is innate. It is not, for the greatest part, dependent either on experience or even the presence of other animals of the same species for its expression.² Human language, on the other hand, is, apart from its physiological means, completely a matter of learning and serves throughout as an instrument of social expression and suasion. Modern literature, particularly poetry, fails to discourse—and in ridding itself of social values it rids itself of its specifically human character and becomes mere sound. This is unthinkingly justified in terms of the notion that poetry is concerned only with the matter of formal beauty. Leaving aside the over-all implications of this doctrine it is possible to show that the textual or physical beauty of a poem is a function of its ideational content. The poetic sense is simply the ability to select the most appropriate words to conjure up a specific vision. No word is intrinsically beautiful, any more than a given color or line is beautiful. Even the aesthetic values of nonsense verse derive in a vague way from their association with some form of sensible discourse. Consequently, purging words of their meaning must ultimately lead to purging them of their beauty. And, in one fashion or another, every tendency in modern poetry is driving more or less rapidly toward this verbal nirvana.

In terms of *Weltanschauung* the dehumanization in literature is easily localizable. In her interesting work, *The Emperor's Clothes*, Kathleen Nott identifies the central notion and notes its ramifications and roots:

Chief among the dogmas which they [modern neo-scholastics] try to import into our intellectual outlook is the dogma of Original Sin, which is certainly the psychological foundation of Christian Orthodoxy. This dogma implies, not that we do not or are unwilling to use our reasoning powers upon our own natures, but that we are incapable of doing so...

The totally non-scientific concept of Original Sin, which is the essence both of Church theology and of neo-scholasticism, is also in fact the only belief which allows us to destroy babies and the unborn, in peace of conscience. It can do this because it enables us to act in peace of intellect...

An attempt is often made to equate Sin with the Freudian concept of basic aggression, or with egocentrism. Many psychologists do in fact take what the theologians would call a much more Pelagian view of human character than Freud's. They believe that aggression, the impulse toward hate and destruction, is not innate but acquired. But it is not on theological grounds that they argue with Freud. *And for the theologian it does not much matter who turns out to be right, because all psychologists admit that even in early infancy there is an observable phenomenon which is at present better described by the term "aggression" than by any other.* [Italics ours.]

Unfortunately Miss Nott does not utilize all her opportunities:

Lack of precision and lack of agreement in terminology is certainly one of the greatest weaknesses of contemporary psychology. The vagueness of many of its concepts and their liability to misinterpretation can often be traced to the fact that the psychologist's language is still overshadowed by unconscious theological assumptions. The opposition which Freud makes between a reality principle and a pleasure principle is a case in point. One cannot miss the implication that Reality is somehow right, and Pleasure is somehow wrong—that Freud has not quite eradicated from his own mind the theological notion that our instinctive drives are sinful.

There is very little in the last paragraph that is correct: The connection between psychoanalysis (which the author carelessly implies is synonymous with psychology as such) and theology is original sin. Miss Nott has herself demonstrated this. Why, then, should the psychoanalyst purge his language of "overshadowing" theological terminology, or "eradicate from his own mind" the theological notions of which psychoanalysis is the great continuator?

² *King Solomon's Ring*, by K. Z. Lorenz. Ch. 8.

Original sin is not an "implication" of psychoanalysis, it is the heart and soul of the doctrine.³

The relation of all of this to the New Criticism in particular is immediately apparent to anyone acquainted with the latter. Our object has simply been to define the content back of Hedley's accusation against the fascist "philosophers" of modern art that "They don't try to solve the real problems confronting humanity, but only to justify their own lack of humanity".

III

"Original sin" provides a convenient bridge to the question of irrationality in modern art. The absurdity of original sin has not prevented the concept from flourishing nor its practitioners from prospering today as never since the rigidities of Calvin. And the retention and growth of this pre-scientific impurity is at once cause and effect of the multiplication of a host of other intellectual fetiches that have been interwoven throughout the fabric of modern thought.

Capitalist social relations are fundamentally blind; the crazy, illogical mechanism of production, uncontrolled and uncomprehended, determines the affairs of men behind their backs. To the original and inherent demonism of the system is now added, in superabundance, lies, tricks, fraud and cheating. The mass and weight of such phenomena are invariably in inverse proportion to the health of the social system. Never before in history has the technical apparatus (comprising not only the mass and class media of communication but the educational system which creates a market for them) for the dissemination of this junk been so effectual and overwhelming. As a consequence the true social determinants of behavior are increasingly difficult to discover and scientific explanation itself becomes a highly problematic quantity. On the one hand, explanation, or what is the same thing—causality—is denied, as in modern physics, or, on the other hand, it is simply unscientific, as in psychoanalysis. The differences cancel out in the common negative result. Our "age of science", upon investigation, turns out in many respects to be utterly pre-scientific.

An instance particularly relevant to modern art is the current fetic of symbolization as this is reflected, first of all, in literary criticism. Here is one of a multitude of possible examples. Stanley Hyman in his book *The Armed Vision* is describing the work of a modern critic, Kenneth Burke, whom he considers highly important:

By way of hints of the *Symbolic*, Burke notes: that "purely philosophic theories of power" may be inspired "by personal problems of potency"; that Henry Adam's *Education* is a rebirth ritual, and *Murder in the Cathedral* a purification ritual; that Arnold's *Sohrab and Rustum* (for obvious reasons in the son of Thomas Arnold) reverses the Jack the Giant Killer pattern of fantasy and has the son slain in combat by the father; that Hume's questioning of "ancestry" in attacking causality and Bentham's "neutral" or "sterilized" vocabulary are significantly "bachelors" theories; that pragmatism, instrumentalism, operationalism, and similar philosophies featuring "agency" all point at a fixation on the mother, whereas "purpose" philosophies point at the erotic woman of maturity; that the turn from verse to prose in a writer's work may be a similar development from the "maternal" or "familial" to the "erotic" or adult . . .

Compare the above with the following examples of the mode of thought in another period of decline—at the close of the Middle Ages:

Thus the twelve months signified the apostles, the four seasons the evangelists, the year Christ. A regular cluster was formed of systems of seven. With the seven virtues

³ See: "The Ring of the Nibelung", by Wilhelm Lünen. *Contemporary Issues*, No. 19.

correspond the seven supplications of the Lord's Prayer, the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, the seven beatitudes and the seven penitential psalms. All these groups of seven are again connected with the seven moments of the Passion and the seven sacraments. Each of them is opposed to one of the seven deadly sins, which are represented by seven animals and followed by seven diseases... The highest conceptions have symbols by the thousands. Nothing is too humble to represent and to glorify the sublime. The walnut signifies Christ; the sweet kernel is His divine nature, the green and pulpy outer peel is His humanity, the wooden shell between is the cross.⁴

What we have to do with here is a pathological manifestation of symbolism—a disease which spreads wherever true explanation fails or whenever the mechanics of causality are no longer comprehended. Causality is designed to illuminate the real relationships between things; symbolization and allegory (considered as causal devices) are, in the final analysis, mere teleology. They are concerned with why an event occurs—not in the sense of the causes which produced it, but in the sense of its ultimate purpose or signification. It is clear that the solution of the latter question requires no science, no proof, no sense even. Relationships are possible between any two or more phenomena and these relationships are accounted established as soon as a quality common to both is abstracted. The significance or weight this common denominator bears in the things compared is not considered, nor does it matter if the common quality be real or unreal.

When something happens one may ask either what made it to happen or why, in the teleological sense, it did happen. Only the first mode of asking the question permits of a valid answer. The other is regressive, primitive. The signficatory relation is of course analogical. Now analogy is a fruitful source for the suggestion of explanation, but by itself it never constitutes an explanation; it is the beginning, both historically and operationally, of the process of elucidation, never its end.

It may seem that causality has far more to do with science than with literature except for criticism. Yet one need only recall that virtually everything obscure, meaningless and unmotivated in modern literature from the novels of Joyce, Stein and Kafka to the poetry of Dylan Thomas and T. S. Eliot has at one time or another been excused or "explained" on the basis that it is symbolic. It becomes of some importance therefore to understand the mechanism as well as the reasons for this relatively new-found significance of symbolism.

The situation in an analogous historical period helps to point up the main features: Toward the close of the Middle Ages ruling classes had very largely outlived their usefulness. However, a clear perception of this might have proven disastrous for the strata involved. Clear perception, which is grounded in causality, had to be rendered difficult if not impossible. In its place a symbolic mythology appeared which masked real relations. This superstitious mode of thought made of every relation, no matter how fanciful, a real thing. At a certain point, from the profusion of relations, it became impossible to abstract the essential relation. This is one of the ideological functions of pathological symbolism in a dying social order.

Human thought is naturally causal: Every gap in genuine explanation is immediately filled by spurious notions, for mind like every other part of nature abhors a vacuum. Though the *natural* sciences had, in the feudal period, been necessarily burdened with fictions, social relations prior to the decline were crystal clear. The degeneration of the ruling class was to muddy this clarity. The capitalist revolution, on the other hand, threw out a multitude

⁴ Huizinga, J., *The Waning of the Middle Ages*. Doubleday Anchor Books.

of natural chimeras, but was swathed at birth in a cloud of social mythology—the notion of equality—which was to grow increasingly intricate as capitalism aged. With the development of the new system man's command of nature grew in the same measure as his power over his social relations shrank. The technical apparatus designed to control nature ended by controlling man and consequently as nature became humanized man became brutalized. But continuance of the contradiction ultimately meant loss of control over nature as well. This is clearly exemplified by the uncontrollable and catastrophic climatological and biological results of man's "planned" interference with nature via hydrogen bombs, chemical fertilizers etc. Now, in the period of *general* decline, the natural sciences are being lowered to the level of official sociology.

Huizinga's study of the feudal mind in decay provides a standard against which to measure the official intellect of our own time:

In the Middle Ages the symbolist attitude was much more in evidence than the causal or genetic attitude. Not that this latter mode of conceiving the world, as a process of evolution, was wholly absent. [In practice it never can be wholly absent or else affairs couldn't continue. Nevertheless, when the mode sinks into relative insignificance real progress is definitely slowed]...

From the causal point of view, symbolism appears as a sort of short-circuit of thought... Moreover, it reveals itself as a very primitive function, when envisaged from an ethnological point of view. Primitive thought is characterized by a general feebleness of perception of the exact demarcation between different concepts, so that it tends to incorporate into the notion of a definite something all the notions connected with it by any relation or similitude whatsoever. With this tendency the symbolizing function is closely related...

Symbolism at all times [!] shows a tendency to become mechanical. Once accepted as a principle, it becomes a product, not of poetical enthusiasm only, but of subtle reasoning as well, and as such it grows to be a parasite clinging to thought, causing it to degenerate...

Symbolism was, in fact, played out. Finding symbols and allegories had become a meaningless intellectual pastime, shallow fancifulness resting on a single analogy. The sanctity of the object still gives it some small spiritual value. As soon as the craze of symbolism spreads to profane or simply moral matters decadence is manifest. [Compare with the present-day vogue of symbolism in literature, painting, psychology, anthropology etc.]...

The symbolic mentality was an obstacle to the development of causal thought, as causal and genetic relations must needs look insignificant by the side of symbolic connections. Thus the sacred symbolism of the two luminaries and the two swords for a long time barred the road to historic and juridical criticism of papal authority. For the symbolizing of Papacy and Empire as the Sun and the Moon, and as the two swords brought by the Disciples, was to the medieval mind far more than a striking comparison, it revealed the mystic foundation of the two powers, and established directly the precedence of St. Peter. Dante, in order to investigate the historical foundation of the pope's primacy, had first to deny the appropriateness of the symbolism.

The time was not distant when people were bound to awake to the dangers of symbolism; when arbitrary [!] and futile [!] allegories would become distasteful and be rejected as trammels [!] of thought.

Because of its important influence on virtually every art form ("stream of consciousness" in literature, "surrealism" in painting and literature, etc.) and because it is a pure example of unreason, we may cursorily examine psychoanalysis in the light of the foregoing. The Freudian Unconscious is the *Ding an sich* of the 20th century and the classical objection to Kantianism (to know a thing is unknowable is already to know it) is even more emphatically true of psychoanalysis, which posits literally dozens of qualities of the unknown or Unconscious. It is not as Miss Nott would have it "... lack of precision and lack of agreement in terminology" which is back of the "vagueness" of psychoanalytical concepts. On the contrary the metaphorical

language perfectly reflects an imprecise and illogical concept. If we pause to compare a typical passage from Freud with one of Huizinga's recapitulations of declining intelligence the justice of this observation must strike us. First Huizinga:

In a visionary like Alain de la Roche the aesthetic element prevails. His symbolic speculations are very highly elaborated and somewhat factitious. In order to obtain a system in which the numbers fifteen and ten enter, representing the cycles of 150 Aves and of 15 Paters, which he prescribed to his Brotherhood of the Rosary, he adds the eleven celestial spheres and the four elements and then multiplies by the ten categories (substance, quality, etc.). As the product he obtained 150 natural habits. In the same way the multiplication of the ten commandments by fifteen virtues gives 150 moral habits. To arrive at the figure of fifteen virtues, he counts, besides the three theological virtues and the four cardinal virtues, seven capital virtues, which makes fourteen; there remain two other virtues: religion and penitence; that makes sixteen, which is one too many; but as temperance of the cardinal series is identical with abstinence of the capital series, we finally obtain the number fifteen. Each of these fifteen virtues is a queen having her nuptial bed in one of the divisions of the Pater Noster. Each of the words of the Ave signifies one of the fifteen perfections of the Virgin, and at the same time a precious stone, and is able to drive away a sin, or the animal which represents that sin. They represent other things as well: the branches of a tree which carries all the blessed ones; the steps of a staircase. To quote but two examples: the word Ave signifies the innocence of the Virgin and the diamond; it drives away pride, or the lion, which represents pride. The word *Maria* denotes her wisdom and the carbuncle; it drives away envy, symbolized by a black dog.

Sometimes Alain gets a little entangled in his very complicated system of symbolisms.⁵

Now Freud:

I shall tarry a little longer at the analysis of chance numbers, for I know of no other individual observation which would so readily demonstrate the existence of highly organized thinking processes, of which consciousness has no knowledge. Moreover, there is no better example of analysis in which the suggestion of the position, a frequent accusation, is so distinctly out of consideration. I shall therefore report the analysis of a chance number of one of my patients (with his consent), to which I will only add that he is the youngest of many children and that he lost his beloved father in his young years.

While in a particularly happy mood, he let the number 426,718 come to his mind, and put to himself the question, "Well, what does it bring to your mind?" First came a joke he had heard: "If your catarrh of the nose is treated by a doctor, it lasts 42 days, if it is not treated, it lasts 6 weeks." This corresponds to the first digit of the number ($42 = 6 \times 7$). During the blocking that followed this first solution, I called his attention to the fact that the number of six digits selected by him contains all the first numbers except 3 and 5. He at once found the continuation of the solution:

"We were altogether 7 children, I was the youngest. Number 3 in the order of the children corresponds to my sister A., and 5 to my brother L.; both of them were my enemies. As a child, I used to pray to the Lord every night that He should take out of my life these two tormenting spirits. It seems to me that I have fulfilled for myself this wish: '3' and '5', the *evil* brother and the hated sister, are omitted."

"If the number stands for your sisters and brothers, what significance is there to 18 at the end? You were altogether only 7."

"I often thought if my father had lived longer, I should not have been the youngest child. If one more would have come, we should have been 8, and there would have been a younger child, toward whom I could have played the role of the older one."

With this, the number was explained, but we still wished to find the connection between the first part of the interpretation and the part following it. This came very readily from the condition required for the last digits—if the father had lived longer, $42 = 6 \times 7$ signifies the ridicule directed against the doctors who could not help the father, and in this way, expresses the wish for the continued existence of the father. The whole number really corresponds to the fulfillment of his two wishes in reference to his family circle—namely, that both the evil brother and sister should die and that another little child should follow him. Or, briefly expressed: If only these two had died in place of my father!⁶

⁵ Huizinga, *op. cit.*, p. 207-8.

⁶ *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*. (Modern Library Ed.) Book 1, Ch. 7, "Determinism—Chance—and Superstitious Beliefs".

There is no quarrel with Freud's contention that everything in mental life, as in all else, is determined. The point is that in order to "readily demonstrate the existence of highly organized thinking processes, of which consciousness has no knowledge,"⁷ Freud has literally *created* a series of determinations. The objection that it is not Freud but the free association of patients themselves which establishes determinations holds very little water. The entire basis for the patient-analyst relation is suggestion hence the freeness of free association is a dubious matter. While it is theoretically possible to account for every occurrence, including "chance numbers", these can be accounted for *naturally* in terms of the strength, recency, importance etc. of associations. The explanation need not involve the illogical mediation of a highly conscious unconscious.

The anomalousness of all of this is at its height when Freud attempts to probe a purely symbolic-regressive phenomenon such as the dream by means of his symbolic method. Dreams are a function of the past and present, internal and external environment of the sleeper and the "interpretation" of dreams is no more than a correlation between the dream images and these states. That is, dreams reflect different aspects of reality—the distortion being *purely a function of the lowered level of consciousness and nothing more*. Dreams are therefore no more a mystery than any other imperfectly rational construction such as myth, legend or psychoanalysis itself. In one of his letters to Sophie Volland, Diderot wrote:

What an odd thing conversations are, especially when the company is a bit varied. Note the circuits that we've made; dreams caused by delirium are no more anomalous; nevertheless, just as there is nothing disconnected either in the head of a man who dreams or of one who is mad, so everything also adheres in conversation; but sometimes it would be difficult to recover the imperceptible links which have drawn together so many disparate ideas. One man tosses out a word which he has detached from what has preceded and followed in his head; another man does the same, and then it's every man for himself. A single physical quality can lead the mind which is preoccupied with it to an infinity of diverse things. Let's take a color, yellow, for example: gold is yellow, silk is yellow, bile is yellow, hay is yellow; how many other threads would not this thread respond to? Madness, the dream, the disorder of conversation all consist in passing from one thing to another through the mediation of a common quality.

If this explains the "logical" processes involved in dreaming it explains those involved in psychoanalysis as well, which is surely a form of mental disease whose etiology is social. That a lowered level of social consciousness can produce in ideology results similar to those that a lowered level of consciousness can produce in an individual is striking confirmation of the fruitfulness of the analogy between the social and the biological organism.

The *prevalence* of unreason, then, is never an accident in a stratified social order. (Reason is, of course, relative to the material and intellectual possibilities of any given age.) In almost every *decisive* epoch the dominant ideology is shot through with superstition, and, conversely, the forces of progress tend to identify themselves with its opposite. The conscious and unconscious undermining of reason is a classic reaction of the currents representing outmoded relations of production—currents which would deny the possibility of a rational course because they are either too stupid or too selfish to take it.

⁷ How it is possible to separate thought from consciousness is a nice problem for Freudians to solve. It is, in fact, impossible to conceive of thought without consciousness or consciousness without thought. The only place for an Unconscious then is in non-thinking processes, e. g., instinctive responses. But this kind of Unconscious is too "simple" for Freudianism. It debars all question of Id, Ego, Censorship, Condensation, Distortion, etc. by the Unconscious.

Reason is simply the recognition of what is necessary, and reasonable behavior consists of acting on the basis of that recognition. Avoidance of such action, of the ultimate consequences of clarity, is responsible for the irrationalism prevalent in all areas of intellectual life today, including the artistic.

IV

Hedley's identification of Marx with Stalinism has already been noted and his easy acceptance of the claims of American critics between 1931 and 1945 that they were Marxists is part of the same business. If Hedley renders their ideas justly then it is hard to see what these critics had in common with Marx. Did Marx ever say the writer "had to be more than just an artist"? And what of the notion that "the good Marxist . . . automatically became the good critic"? This is the very elementary mistake of confusing a method with its application. A useful method enables one to become expert; it is not the expertness itself. The latter requires turning the method on a problem—and the result is always a measure of the adequacy of the method itself. Is Marx responsible for such dicta as: "... What served the cause . . . was good art"? Or did he ever judge a work on the basis of whether or not it "heralded a proletarian revolution"? In fact he had nothing whatever to do with the notion of art as propaganda or with the "concept" of "proletarian art". Stalin's *commandments* on art and Marx's *insights into* art are two very different matters. We need only recall how Marx counterposed the reactionary giant Balzac to the Socialist pigmy Zola to see that Marx's judgments were no crude Stalinist affair. Nor were any of the other truly big international figures of Marxist criticism—Mehring, Plekhanov, Trotsky—guilty of either concept mentioned above. Indeed Trotsky in his work *Literature and Revolution* explicitly rejected the whole concept of proletarian culture. Finally one must ask what Marx has in common with the attempt to establish a "single standard of criticism capable of evaluating all literature past and present." Actually Marx's was the single greatest influence in weaning thought away from abstractions such as "single standard". That the context of ideas determine their limitations—for this commonplace, this bedrock of modern criticism—we are indebted to Marx. Justice requires us to state: There is not one significant contemporary work of criticism which does not to a greater or lesser extent bear the imprint of Marx's insight into the relation of culture and the social process.

Hedley makes some careless judgments of totalitarianism which have the effect of giving too much comfort to the system. He describes Fascism as: "... the ultimate of preserving and enlarging the status quo . . ." In another place Hedley writes: "... all totalitarianisms are collective". While it is undoubtedly true that Fascism preserves the status quo, one can hardly say, without qualification, that it enlarges it. Fascism enlarges the negative side of capitalism (lack of real democracy, production of noxious commodities, etc.) but by the same measure it contracts the positive aspects of the system. Even worse is the idea that totalitarianism is collective. The collective means the people. Is totalitarianism really a *people's* system? No one but totalitarians would claim this. Totalitarianism is the opposite of collective—it is the ultimate means of preserving private privilege. Nor is Hedley's corollary implication that the New Criticism is collective correct;—the collective knows little and rightly cares less about this species of scrap production.

The quotation from Eliot's writings with which Hedley begins his essay leads us directly into a discussion of collectivism or the relation of poetry to the collective. The statement has some peculiarities: The *right* to an opinion everyone has; the value of opinions rather than the right to have them is the variable quantity—to all except totalitarians. That the public is not well informed is a correct statement—but that the public is *never* well enough informed—to judge art—is clearly wrong. That the public of Greece's golden age was on a level with the art it encouraged is clear from all evidence. What Eliot has glimpsed in his deliberately muddled fashion is that *modern* art (as distinct from the mass media of communication) has a minority character. Poetry once the language of all, is now the plaything of the few. It has become a species of luxury goods. Because of this it can be as esoteric and special as it will. This has not resulted, however, in its being any the less commercial. Rather it is one of those high-priced items whose commercial value in fact depends on its scarcity, its preciousness.

The minority character of art is its general character in exploitative societies. This flows from the division of labor with its congealed distinctions between manual and intellectual workers and spectators and creators. The relation of artist to public finally determines the character of art either as the special activity of a minority or as the part-time activity of all. (Of course the fact that all were artists in primitive culture did not obviate the differences in the quality of the art individuals produced.) The true revolution in art may be less in the form or content than in the social side of this activity. It is certain that the relation of producer to consumer must become fluid. In the final analysis the creative is best understood and most prized by the creative—not necessarily or even at best by those who create the same art forms.

Nor is the ideal relation of art to the collective exhausted by the notion that all must be artists if art is to be of significance to all. The organic interconnections between the categories of work, play and art, largely severed since primitive culture, must be re-established. Their division left wounds never healed—wounds reflected in the tediousness of labor, the frivolousness of play, the insignificance of art. The futile attempts of aestheticians to distinguish the three spheres results from the seeming fortuitousness of their connection. The division of labor has clouded the obvious: the necessity of play to work, the seriousness or workmanliness of play; the artistry of labor, the laboriousness of art; the playfulness of art and the artfulness of play. The "whole life" requires labor that is artful and joyous. At the same time such an existence will make clear that play and art originate in, train for, and relax from labor, just as they are incorporated into the final product of the latter.

Here the inadequacy of Hedley's recipe for poetry—recourse to "little" magazines—becomes apparent. Hedley has diagnosed the disease of poetry as fascism—has noted how every aspect of form and content of the new poetry is involved in and bears the stamp of the disease. And what does he propose as a remedy?—a pink pill. Perhaps Hedley does not realize that the cancer has spread through almost every organ and tissue of the body politic. Perhaps lack of knowledge of tradition prevents him from seeing the heights from which art has fallen and the hard climb ahead. Surely Hedley is aware of what honesty compels us to say: the little magazines are, by and large, producing tasteless, pale imitations of the cultural crap for sale at the more popular retail outlets. True, these magazines serve as expressive outlets—but

what of the expressions themselves. How good are they? How many of these magazines have *principled* differences with their brethren? Hedley knows the answers to these questions better than we do. He has exactly described the situation wherein the avant-garde of yesterday has become the old guard of today. The significance of the characterization seems to have escaped him however. The avant-garde (and this will be as true of the current crop—the little magazines—as it was of the old crop) "revolts" against the status quo only in order to find its way into it. No sooner does it succeed than it acts like any other vested interest and attempts to cut the heart out of its competitors. Perspective enables us to see that this is in reality a social rather than an artistic problem. The tradition, in English literature, is old, dating from the beginning of industrial capitalism. For it was Wordsworth, who really sired the first great poetry of modern capitalism—the romantic—and it was Wordsworth who was the first to betray his own ideals. And the betrayals have continued up to the present. The only new consideration is that the spiral is a descending one—the level is always getting lower. Thus Wordsworth wrote poetry, never mind its quality, up to the very end. What are we to call the productions of the modern avant-garde from beginning to end?

Great art is dependent on great life. The possibilities of and for art depend on the possibilities of and for social life. When the latter is exhausted the former will shortly exhaust itself as well. To think otherwise is to regard art as unconditioned. But only the totality of existence is unconditioned—not just one of its manifestations. It is utopian to think the crisis of poetry will be overcome by the creation of little magazines. Thousands of such magazines, movements and schools have already come into being in the 20th century—and passed away, full of despair, or have remained and flourished, only to mock their own ideals.

If we are looking for a way out we must turn from Hedley to Paolo Milano. In his essay on Dante he writes:

The source of his [Dante's] greatness as a poet lies probably in his native feeling that the artist's creation is not only an esthetic act, but also a way of knowing, and a road to moral perfection. As a statement of the complexity of the artist's task this may sound obvious. But it is worth recalling especially if one looks at the state of contemporary art. How much of it is at once beautiful, philosophically true, and morally edifying? A slow dissociation of these three qualities has been at work for centuries, and we are reduced to admire, as if in separate wings of a gallery, the flesh according to Matisse, the mind according to Picasso, and the heart according to Rouault. Twenty generations after Dante's time, we have travelled to the opposite end of history—we live in an age where the split between mind, matter, and soul (to use Dante's terms) has become so complete that we feel it is about to be reversed. This must account for the fascination Dante has for us. His peace of mind is our lost paradise.

It is a fact that our poets are ready, intellectually at least, to accept the lesson the achievement of the *Commedia* exemplifies so persuasively. They acknowledge, as Herbert Read once remarked, that "the poet is only capable of his intuitive experiences so long as he receives some sort of sanction from the procedure of thought. A positive poetry is possible when the esthetic intuitions of the poet co-operate with the thought of the philosopher (as in the case of Lucretius and Dante)". . . .

If the world is to see another poet whose moral fiber and universal mind are comparable to Dante's, it will only be in an age happily purged of the separateness which plagues our civilization and threatens its inner death.

Dante is peculiarly the poet of the whole; and we shall read him best when we have been made whole again, and in our own way.

Several things are worth noting about this: 1. Though Milano's subject is poetry he indicates the same considerations apply to painting. 2. Milano feels that the split is about to be bridged and indicates the only possible line of

development for a living poetry: that it lose its special, fetichistic character; that in order to speak *to* us it must speak *for* us; that the "improvement" of the purely formal side of poetry has reached its limit—the only way to go now, if one pursues this path, is backward. Poetry must be "beautiful, philosophically true, and morally edifying". The exclusive development of the first side has turned into its opposite. It is here as with the individual who develops just one side of his nature and produces in the end only imbalance or monstrosity. 3. "An age purged of separateness" necessarily refers to a stage beyond capitalism. It is the latter which has brought the separateness to the greatest point it ever reached in human history. 4. Finally, we must take heed of Milano's injunction that we have to be made whole again "in our own way"—not in Dante's way, as Eliot and the New Critics would have it. Dante's universality as such serves as model, rather than his specific formula for arriving at universality.

The natural question is how to produce an art "at once beautiful, philosophically true, and morally edifying" in a society as unbeautiful, untrue and immoral as the present. Milano appears to say that this is only possible in a stage after capitalism. This need not mean, however, that the social change will precede the new art in time, only that the new art must contain the ingredients of the social change—must be whole. The conditions for such a poetry are many. However, they surely must include both knowledge and utilization of the traditions of art and freedom from commodity characteristics. Milano's formulation has sufficient depth and generality to cover the problem. And wherever people have thought the question carefully through, they have, regardless of formal political allegiance, reached the same conclusion. Wyndham Lewis concludes his last book, *The Demon of Progress in the Arts* with these words:

We seem to be running down, everywhere in life, to a final end to all good things. Compared to fifty years ago, when the supreme and ultimate rot began, our food—our milk, our cheese, our bread, our concocted foods, everything, in short, is inferior, and there is every reason to suppose that it will get more so, decade by decade. The cloth our clothes are made of has declined in quality, not only in beauty but in durability, to such an extent that no tailor would have the face to deny it. The furniture at present manufactured, the materials with which our houses are built, the bricks, the mortar, the wood, the fittings, are notoriously inferior to what they were a short century ago. Paper is not what it was, in our newspapers, our books, our writing materials and so on; steel products, such as scissors, pins, etc., become less and less reliable; the gut used in surgical stitching is no longer graded; but it is not necessary to enumerate this decline in detail. Everything that is sold in the shops is necessarily inferior to what it was so short a time ago as twelve months. Why? For the very good reason that the word *business* may be defined as buying cheap and selling dear. Mr. Franklin Delano Roosevelt insisted that "The business man is a crook". He is, by definition, dishonest. The board meetings and conferences in every business establishment concern themselves always with some essentially dishonest device for putting more money in their pockets; in the case of the manufacturers, the subject discussed is how, in manufacturing their specialty, they may cheat the public—to make the public pay the same price (or more) for an article composed of less valuable ingredients. This must involve a progressive deterioration of everything we buy, from the gas in our meters to the socks on our feet.

Meanwhile, the great suspense is a factor of daily ruin. The enormous cost entailed by the fabulous armaments imposed on both sides in the preparation for the *next* war is alone sufficient to bleed us white, to maintain a dangerous fever in all our blood; and, since the arms we are now manufacturing are potentially so destructive that when at length they are used they may entirely alter our lives, they are responsible for the great suspense.

Well. Unless human beings are going to experience the same deterioration in the very tissues of which their bodies are composed, unless their skins are to lose their resilience, their warmth, and all the other qualities which make them so high class a covering for a man to have; unless nature is to begin to take less trouble over our nails, our hair

(that may disappear altogether), our wonderful shining eyes, which may become dull and myopic, so that spectacles must be provided for all from the cradle onwards—unless all this is to come about there will have to be some great revolution.

Lewis's "great revolution" and Milano's "age happily purged of separateness" are really the same thing, of course.

But let us return once more to Eliot's statement concerning the relation of the public to art. Eliot is surely as much aware as we are that classical Greece belies his contention. Why then the statement? In an otherwise turgid survey of modern literary criticism Hyman (op. cit.) finds room for Edmund Burke's wonderful phrase, "Every man his own critic", and, in another place, Hyman remarks:

...by extending method, *more* men can be capable critics, in most cases not professionally, but in their private reading and their lives. And the vested interest that possibility menaces are much bigger game than the priesthood of literary criticism.

Very true. That possibility threatens all vested interest, all authority—including Mr. Eliot and his church, and, we might add, Hyman himself—for when every man is his own critic *professionalism as such disappears*. This ultimate conclusion Hyman avoids—just as he avoids telling us that method is not being extended today—quite the reverse. It is disappearing from criticism along with standards, common sense, clarity, simplicity and reason. In order to avoid ultimate conclusions, to avoid taking the *necessary* step, all these qualities are being washed away from criticism and, indeed, from all thought by the foul, muddy, obscure waters of guilt and unreason. Mr. Eliot's snobism is only one small part of the views that "vested interests" will propagate to protect themselves. What of the current dogma, to which Eliot subscribes, of the inherently inferior and evil nature of man? This is designed to hide the evil nature of the few and the real inferiority of the many; it is of a piece with indeterminism and symbolism which would conceal from us the causes of our misery and, indeed, render it impossible for us ever to discover these and fix responsibility where it belongs. The real, historically conditioned blindness of the social mechanism is to be philosophically justified by the supposedly immanent blindness of man in nature. Thus it is not extension of method but its obfuscation which is the order of the day.

If Eliot's statement is pure propaganda, the problem presented is: Under what conditions does the public become well enough informed to acquire good taste? To list all the conditions is obviously impossible here. This does not mean capitulation to the common notion that ancient Greece and other similar highpoints of civilization were historical accidents, inexplicable and unduplicable. Such a view is precisely the same stupid indeterminism which we are combatting. The "accident" was surely determined and the job of science is, in fact, to posit its determinations. Miss Nott indicates *one* factor in classic art which serves to explain the level of both artist and spectator:

Classical art has been the product of small societies (small either as cities or in caste) where the rules of behavior, both social and artistic, were immediately visible and did not have to be made explicit. This single fact of the inevitable association of classicism with the small community is of prime importance if we wish to understand whether we can or ought to restore a new classicism.

Whether we *ought* to restore a new classicism, in the sense of an art, which is social and a society which is artful, in the sense of an order which makes classics possible, is no question at all. Whether we *can* restore (and raise to a higher level) classicism is of course a social as well as an artistic

question. The value of Miss Nott's remark lies not only in the fact that it serves, at least partially, to "explain" this art, but that *just by that measure* it is implicitly critical of present-day production. (Here is another illustration of the value of tradition as a standard.) Her remark demarcates the limits beyond which the modern *mass* artistic media cannot go, for the mass media have to please not a community where the rules of behavior are immediately visible but a whole world of special interests. And if the cinema at least produced one genius—Chaplin—his fate as an exile is eloquent testimony of the contradiction between mass art production and quality work.

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This bespeaks a living tradition. Contrast such a situation with that under which modern art (not the mass media now) labors. The avant-garde specializes in just the opposite. The basis for behavior is, with them, completely invisible and cannot be made explicit. Thus modern art is showy, bizarre, sensational and obscure. Its infatuation perfectly accords with the infatuation of a society subject to elemental and uncontrolled eruptions. Here is the connection between fascism and modern art—the first is political slavery, the second spiritual slavery. Both exemplify the blindness of contemporary social life. And for this reason art—real art—is so hard to come by at present. Real art is artful: a skilled, controlled, *conscious* process. Modern art is precisely the opposite. Present-day schools of consequence demonstrate even in their designation, the absence of control: "stream of consciousness"—"stream" is a perfect description for this kind of formless literary free association. And if this faction surrenders control over internal processes, "naturalism" yields dominion of the external world: Conscious choice, necessity, essence disappear and are replaced by a philosophy of enslavement to circumstance. The deification of the "Unconscious" practised by "surrealism" is yet another instance of the same abjectness.

How then could the public be well enough informed to have good taste, if the art which is to form its taste and inform its mind is essentially formless, shallow and vulgar? This is the point: The avant-garde is neither more nor less than the artistic equivalent of the nouveau riche. It is wholly a product of "quick money" and, as such, *essentially* vulgar. It has never taken time and care to acquire adequate preparation and training. This kind of avant-garde appears when there is a gap in tradition; when the connection has been broken; when the older masters have almost completely disappeared. With their disappearance standards disappear. And when art, which is the school of taste, loses its standards, vulgarity strikes the dominant chord in social life generally. Vulgarity is a distinctly social phenomenon. It is rarely seen in primitive cultures because there tradition is a powerful voice—and necessarily so. Vulgarity is sometimes said to vary inversely with the religiosity of a culture. But religion has very little to do with taste. Classical Greece was largely a-religious, but tasteful and the 18th century, the age of reason—not faith—was the last period to have generally tasteful arts and artifacts. The debasement of taste which is vulgarity, goes hand in hand with the debasement of art which is the school of taste—and occurs when social tradition, here synonymous with reason, restraint and balance, disappears.

V

The final accounting shows that Leslie Woolf Hedley's essay is not so much wrong as it is superficial. There is, moreover, no question of Hedley's honesty

or of the depth of feeling with which he speaks. His errors are just that; certainly they are not pre-fabricated lies. And this is sufficiently fresh and unusual in these days of literary corruption and cynicism to warrant much applause. Therefore we have answered Hedley as we would anyone else whose good-will, sincerity and genuine concern for cultural inadequacies was clear to us.

Hedley's general characterization of modern poetry is surely correct and the affinity of this art, with its anti-humanism and irrationality, to fascism is apparent. The differences between Hedley and ourselves are first in the extent to which we feel that the illness of modern art has spread: we measure it always against the best—and such a comparison must starkly reveal the awful deficiencies of contemporary production. The consequence of differential diagnosis is necessarily a difference in the remedy suggested. If, as Hedley submits, the disease of poetry is political—fascism—then the cure must eradicate *that* disease. In this instance homeopathy is surely indicated: for a political ill, politics are necessary. This does not mean a tendentious, wooden literature. Artistic tendentiousness is itself inhuman and consequently fascistic. It reduces the richness and variety of the total human personality to the status of a mere thing—a one-sided piece of propaganda. What is required is a literature which reaches out for and captures the truth of the time. For what, in the end, does all the modern pre-occupation with mere form signify if not the craven fear of speaking out? Artistic truth is necessarily critical—it could not be otherwise in an age as retrograde as this. In this sense such a literature would be political. Formed, beautiful and outspokenly honest this art would be able to master the chaos presented it by the social order—master it with simplicity and genius—because it would itself be artful. That is, after all, what art means—skilled and conscious mastery of matter. But just such an art will only arise in some connection with a social change; a change to a society itself artful and in control of its environment, molding the latter to fit human need. In this sense one can say that two conditions are necessary for an artistic regeneration: politics must become artful and art political.

Peter Murray

ADEN — COLLECTIVE PUNISHMENT BY BOMBING

COLLECTIVE punishment has long been a means favoured by the Imperial powers in maintaining their coercive grip on their ever restless colonies. Since the last war, not only has the use of collective punishment increased in regularity and scope, but, as an integral part of "colonial development", its efficiency has vastly increased, with the bomber progressively replacing troops, colonial police and political agents who are well on the way to becoming mere auxiliaries to the more impersonal efficiency of TNT. The totalitarian ukase has, so to speak, found its ideal materialisation in the bomber: the one condemns *en masse*; the other destroys *en masse*.

That bombing has played a major role in the campaigns waged by Britain in Malaya and Kenya is common knowledge. The barbarous nature of these attacks on defenceless people has even called forth occasional protest. Yet, excuses and apologetics have always fastened on the "exceptional nature" of these two cases. The little known events in the Aden Protectorate, however, show that the only thing exceptional about the nature of the two cases in question was that their scope compelled publicity; whereas the "small-scale" operations of the airforce against the tribes in the Aden Protectorate could, until recently, easily be kept dark. Nevertheless, the short account which follows reveals that bombing, from being an occasional weapon against restive colonial peoples (used, for instance, for decades in the North-West frontier in India), has become an integral part of colonial policy, to be used indiscriminately as a means of quelling dissident colonial peoples.

In July, 1955, the *Times* reported the bombing by the R.A.F. of five villages in the West Aden Protectorate, because the inhabitants had refused to pay a fine of rifles and money levied by the British Administration in consequence of an alleged criminal offence. The Government did not deem it necessary to make public either the nature of the crime supposedly committed by the entire population, or the reason why the villagers had refused to pay the fine. Then, as now, it maintained a strict censorship of all news concerning the territory in an endeavour to conceal from the public the fact that there is widespread unrest in the area. Indeed, but for an attempt by a number of Labour M.P.'s to make political capital out of the incident, it is doubtful whether the few scraps of information which did emerge from the exchange of hot air in the House would have become public property. Even so the Government sought to convey the impression that the reprisal was merely a routine "admonition" to a few wayward tribesmen guilty of civil offences, for the bombing had been limited to dwellings. The Administration "thoughtfully" gave the villagers concerned forty-eight hours' warning of the impending raid, which enabled these to retreat to the safety of the neighbouring mountains before the arrival of the airforce. The impression of concern for the safety of the people which the Government were at pains to create for public consumption will not stand examination as an extract from a letter to the *Times* (July 27th, 1955) by one who claims to know the territory makes clear:

Tribesmen in the Aden Protectorate are *usually* [My emphasis—P.M.] given the alternative of paying a fine or enduring punishment by air action, even for murder on the trade routes or armed revolt. Nothing could be fairer. Fines are sometimes collected by peaceful means; but if the offenders decide to skip over the border—and it is very easy to do this in south-west Arabia—collective punishment, which they understand, is the only answer. Law and order must be maintained if chaos and anarchy are to be avoided.

It does not, of course, dawn upon this self-styled "expert" that to make the destruction of villages the *content* of "law and order" is to display the inhuman, infatuated "logic" of the capitalist system which is chaos and anarchy personified and for which "law and order" is but a synonym for that violence and destruction which at any moment serves its interests.

It would be too much to hope that an "expert" of this kind should keep things that are different distinct. It is therefore essential to make clear that collective punishment and collective responsibility are not the same thing, much though the British Government would like it to be thought that they are, and that, when they practise collective punishment, they are merely putting into effect "age-old tribal customs" which "they" (the victims)

(that may disappear altogether), our wonderful shining eyes, which may become dull and myopic, so that spectacles must be provided for all from the cradle onwards—unless all this is to come about there will have to be some great revolution.

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The final accounting shows that Leslie Woolf Hedley's essay is not so much wrong as it is superficial. There is, moreover, no question of Hedley's honesty

or of the depth of feeling with which he speaks. His errors are just that; certainly they are not pre-fabricated lies. And this is sufficiently fresh and unusual in these days of literary corruption and cynicism to warrant much applause. Therefore we have answered Hedley as we would anyone else whose good-will, sincerity and genuine concern for cultural inadequacies was clear to us.

Hedley's general characterization of modern poetry is surely correct and the affinity of this art, with its anti-humanism and irrationality, to fascism is apparent. The differences between Hedley and ourselves are first in the extent to which we feel that the illness of modern art has spread; we measure it always against the best—and such a comparison must starkly reveal the awful deficiencies of contemporary production. The consequence of differential diagnosis is necessarily a difference in the remedy suggested. If, as Hedley submits, the disease of poetry is political—fascism—then the cure must eradicate *that* disease. In this instance homeopathy is surely indicated: for a political ill, politics are necessary. This does not mean a tendentious, wooden literature. Artistic tendentiousness is itself inhuman and consequently fascistic. It reduces the richness and variety of the total human personality to the status of a mere thing—a one-sided piece of propaganda. What is required is a literature which reaches out for and captures the truth of the time. For what, in the end, does all the modern pre-occupation with mere form signify if not the craven fear of speaking out? Artistic truth is necessarily critical—it could not be otherwise in an age as retrograde as this. In this sense such a literature would be political. Formed, beautiful and outspokenly honest this art would be able to master the chaos presented it by the social order—master it with simplicity and genius—because it would itself be artful. That is, after all, what art means—skilled and conscious mastery of matter. But just such an art will only arise in some connection with a social change; a change to a society itself artful and in control of its environment, molding the latter to fit human need. In this sense one can say that two conditions are necessary for an artistic regeneration: politics must become artful and art political.

Peter Murray

ADEN — COLLECTIVE PUNISHMENT BY BOMBING

COLLECTIVE punishment has long been a means favoured by the Imperial powers in maintaining their coercive grip on their ever restless colonies. Since the last war, not only has the use of collective punishment increased in regularity and scope, but, as an integral part of "colonial development", its efficiency has vastly increased, with the bomber progressively replacing troops, colonial police and political agents who are well on the way to becoming mere auxiliaries to the more impersonal efficiency of TNT. The totalitarian ukase has, so to speak, found its ideal materialisation in the bomber: the one condemns *en masse*; the other destroys *en masse*.

That bombing has played a major role in the campaigns waged by Britain in Malaya and Kenya is common knowledge. The barbarous nature of these attacks on defenceless people has even called forth occasional protest. Yet, excuses and apologetics have always fastened on the "exceptional nature" of these two cases. The little known events in the Aden Protectorate, however, show that the only thing exceptional about the nature of the two cases in question was that their scope compelled publicity; whereas the "small-scale" operations of the airforce against the tribes in the Aden Protectorate could, until recently, easily be kept dark. Nevertheless, the short account which follows reveals that bombing, from being an occasional weapon against restive colonial peoples (used, for instance, for decades in the North-West frontier in India), has become an integral part of colonial policy, to be used indiscriminately as a means of quelling dissident colonial peoples.

In July, 1955, the *Times* reported the bombing by the R.A.F. of five villages in the West Aden Protectorate, because the inhabitants had refused to pay a fine of rifles and money levied by the British Administration in consequence of an alleged criminal offence. The Government did not deem it necessary to make public either the nature of the crime supposedly committed by the entire population, or the reason why the villagers had refused to pay the fine. Then, as now, it maintained a strict censorship of all news concerning the territory in an endeavour to conceal from the public the fact that there is widespread unrest in the area. Indeed, but for an attempt by a number of Labour M.P.'s to make political capital out of the incident, it is doubtful whether the few scraps of information which did emerge from the exchange of hot air in the House would have become public property. Even so the Government sought to convey the impression that the reprisal was merely a routine "admonition" to a few wayward tribesmen guilty of civil offences, for the bombing had been limited to dwellings. The Administration "thoughtfully" gave the villagers concerned forty-eight hours' warning of the impending raid, which enabled these to retreat to the safety of the neighbouring mountains before the arrival of the airforce. The impression of concern for the safety of the people which the Government were at pains to create for public consumption will not stand examination as an extract from a letter to the *Times* (July 27th, 1955) by one who claims to know the territory makes clear:

Tribesmen in the Aden Protectorate are *usually* [My emphasis—P.M.] given the alternative of paying a fine or enduring punishment by air action, even for murder on the trade routes or armed revolt. Nothing could be fairer. Fines are sometimes collected by peaceful means; but if the offenders decide to skip over the border—and it is very easy to do this in south-west Arabia—collective punishment, which they understand, is the only answer. Law and order must be maintained if chaos and anarchy are to be avoided.

It does not, of course, dawn upon this self-styled "expert" that to make the destruction of villages the *content* of "law and order" is to display the inhuman, infatuated "logic" of the capitalist system which is chaos and anarchy personified and for which "law and order" is but a synonym for that violence and destruction which at any moment serves its interests.

It would be too much to hope that an "expert" of this kind should keep things that are different distinct. It is therefore essential to make clear that collective punishment and collective responsibility are not the same thing, much though the British Government would like it to be thought that they are, and that, when they practise collective punishment, they are merely putting into effect "age-old tribal customs" which "they" (the victims)

"understand". Collective responsibility stems organically from the close bonds of kinship, mutual assistance and equality, no less than from the precarious economic balance characteristic of most primitive societies. Punishment takes the form of repairing the damage done, and is regulated by the fixed tribally-sanctioned rules of compensation in kind. Whatever the wrong, save exceptional and rare offences against the tribal society as a whole, when the offender is either ostracised or killed, if the offender is unable to pay the compensation required by custom, his relations, who consider it a social obligation to clear both the offender and the honour of the group, collectively supply the agreed amount of compensation.

Collective punishment with its "deep guilts", on the other hand, is exclusively an imperialist instrument, used with much vigour on both sides of the iron curtain, for terrorising subject peoples into accepting the "law and order" of their oppressor as their own. To be sure, the Aden tribesmen understand the meaning of collective punishment, for they, like all colonial peoples, have seen the iron heel of progress and development (they have unfortunately experienced only this negative aspect) destroy their indigenous culture or, where circumstances permitted and expediency required, transform such of their customs as were suitable into direct and indirect means of suppression.

The Colonial Secretary's defence of the Aden Administration's action shows that such factors as whether "they understand" or not only enter in as justifications when the matter has to be made palatable for public consumption. Amongst other things, he said:

Collective punishment is imposed only when collective tribal responsibility for a crime can be ascertained. It is the only practical [!!!—P. M.] method of dealing with offences of this kind in the Protectorate—as successive Governments of very different political views in the United Kingdom have continuously held.

Lennox-Boyd later pinpointed his allusion to previous Governments by referring the House to the fact that the first postwar Labour Government sanctioned bombing operations in the North-West Frontier Province of India in 1947, and in the Aden Protectorate in 1948 and 1949. Now, while such items of information are of interest, we are not to be side-tracked by the constitutional trick of pointing to precedents as a justification for the violation of a principle. This piece of parliamentary sleight of hand was not all, for only a few minutes afterwards, categorically stating that the entire population was collectively guilty of a crime and that collective punishment by bombing was the only practical way of administering justice, Lennox-Boyd proceeded to claim that the villagers were punished because it was not possible to arrest individuals. So low is the moral tone of parliament that not a single protest was made against this glaring contradiction. The Colonial Secretary stated:

... Those who had had responsibility for difficult areas of this kind, which were not under our direct administration, and who knew, for example, the Aulqi country, where there had recently been a considerable amount of trouble, would recognize that *where it was not possible to identify and arrest individual culprits*, it was essential to take action of this kind. (*Hansard*, 13th July, 1955. My Emphasis—P. M.)

Need Lennox-Boyd (and members of parliament) be reminded that in this country cases in which it is impossible to arrest individuals are left in the "unsolved" file, for it is repugnant to our sense of justice *at home* to punish innocent by-standers for crimes committed by individuals who remain undetected or who have "skipped over the border".

The only consistent note in the statement quoted is the insistence on the fact that it was "essential to take action of this kind". And why? Because

"there had recently been a considerable amount of trouble in the Aulaqi country", which Lennox-Boyd links directly with the alleged communal crime. This can mean only one thing: There is widespread unrest and open revolt in the Protectorate. The five villages were destroyed both to subdue their defiant inhabitants and as a warning to the whole population of the Aulaqi country. If this conclusion is wrong, it is the responsibility of the Colonial Office to disprove it by making available to the public the full details of the alleged crime. As matters stand, the practices of the Government in this case, as in many others in colonial areas, remind one forcibly of Hitler's methods of dealing with unrest in occupied countries, e.g. the destruction of Lidice in Czechoslovakia.

In spite of the strict censorship of news from the area, sufficient evidence has appeared in the press to substantiate our assertion. A *Sunday Times* correspondent, Michael Faber, who, incidentally, does not object to the bombing of the villages, disclosed that in the past eight months, several million rounds of ammunition have been used, several hundred tons of bombs have been dropped and more than six-hundred hostile incidents have occurred in the Protectorate; while the *Times* (12th July, 1955) reports the temporary evacuation of Robat Fort to free the security forces for further action against the distant tribesmen who were responsible for an attack on a convoy on the 15th June. In addition, Faber reveals that not only have members of the press encountered difficulties in trying to visit the area (about which an otherwise vociferous press has not printed one word in protest), but also, that,

two weeks ago I asked for the totals of (1) hostile incidents, (2) Government casualties, (3) desertions from the Government forces, and (4) bombing and rocket sorties. These official figures have still not been released. (*Sunday Times*, 31st July, 1955)

We too would like to know the answers, particularly to question (4). As the R.A.F. has already used Malaya as a proving ground for experimental aircraft, it is well within the bounds of possibility that new aerial weapons are being tested under "combat conditions" against a people who, in the absence of an outspoken press, have no means of protesting against their use.

The Public Relations Officer of the Government of Aden brings further proof of revolt in a letter to the *Sunday Times* (31st July, 1955), in which he attempts to play down the extent of the unrest. He nevertheless admits that in five of the sixteen states which compose the Protectorate, "tribesmen are operating small bandit gangs", known to be openly opposed to their rulers. He also states that in two other states incidents have occurred.

We can at once dismiss the derogatory description "small bandit gangs", since this is a traditional Colonial Office term for "tribalists" or nationalists who have been forced into revolt against the Imperial Power, and come to the crux of the present "unrest" revealed by the admission that the tribesmen are in revolt against their rulers. To do this it is not necessary to go beyond the terms of the advisory treaty signed between Britain and the ruling Sheikhs. According to Michael Faber, these Sheikhs in the West Aden Protectorate committed themselves to accepting advice from British political agents and in return receive a small stipend, Government help to maintain tribal guards and support against rivals.

One does not need to be a legal expert to see that, in plain language, the British Government maintains its hold over the Protectorate by means of bribery and force. The bombing of the five villages was not an isolated incident, but part of a wider pattern the object of which is to try to force the people of Aden into an "acknowledgment" of the "rule of law".

Alan Dutscher

ORWELL AND THE CRISIS OF RESPONSIBILITY

THE critique of George Orwell's work necessarily takes its general tenor from 1984, not alone because the latter obtrudes omnipresently upon consciousness, but because it presents a critical challenge which has not, so far, been adequately met. Only those of the author's books will be dealt with here which, upon distillation, yield sufficient substance for criticism.

Orwell's early writings offer an uneven picture—some are clearly precursors of 1984, one or two are on a rather high level. The most successful work was, unquestionably, *Down and Out in London and Paris*. In this book the writer meticulously reports his experiences among the most submerged elements of the population: unskilled laborers, tramps, beggars, etc. "Oddly" enough, here, on the uttermost edge of society, Orwell found a life full of color, verve, richness, even joy. The variety and exuberance of the work is almost stunning in comparison with virtually every other composition the author penned. He had discovered, for perhaps the only time in his life, figures of independence, mettle, and genuine humor. The result was a superior bit of Villonesque writing whose healthy, zestful temper was matched by a more-than-occasionally insightful social analysis.¹ Whenever Orwell returned

1 "It is worth saying something about the social position of the beggars, for when one has consorted with them, and found that they are ordinary human beings, one cannot help being struck by the curious attitude that society takes towards them. People seem to feel that there is some essential difference between beggars and ordinary 'working' men. They are a race apart—outcasts, like criminals and prostitutes. Working men 'work', beggars do not 'work'; they are parasites worthless in their very nature. It is taken for granted that a beggar does not 'earn' his living, as a bricklayer or a literary critic 'earns' his. He is a mere social excrescence, tolerated because we live in a humane age, but essentially despicable.

Yet if one looks close one sees that there is no essential difference between a beggar's livelihood and that of numberless respectable people. Beggars do not work, it is said; but then, what is *work*? A navvy works by swinging a pick. An accountant works by adding up figures. A beggar works by standing out of doors in all weathers and getting varicose veins, chronic bronchitis, etc. It is a trade like any other; quite useless, of course—but, then, many reputable trades are quite useless. And as a social type a beggar compares well with scores of others. He is honest compared with the seller of most patent medicines, high-minded compared with a Sunday newspaper proprietor, amiable compared with a hire-purchase tout—in short, a parasite, but a fairly harmless parasite. He seldom extracts more than a bare living from the community, and, what should justify him according to our ethical ideas, he pays for it over and over in suffering. I do not think there is anything about a beggar that sets him in a different class from other people, or gives most modern men the right to despise him.

Then the question arises, why are beggars despised?—for they are despised, universally. I believe it is for the simple reason that they fail to earn a decent living. In practice nobody cares whether work is useful or useless, productive or parasitic; the sole thing demanded is that it shall be profitable. In all the modern talk about energy, efficiency, social service and the rest of it, what meaning is there except 'Get money, get it legally, and get a lot of it'? Money has become the grand test of virtue. By this test beggars fail, and for this they are despised. If one could earn even ten pounds a week at begging, it would become a respectable profession immediately. A beggar, looked at realistically, is simply a businessman, getting his living, like other businessmen, in the way that comes to hand. He has not, more than most people, sold his honour; he has merely made the mistake of choosing a trade at which it is impossible to grow rich."

to the theme of the declassed, as in *The Clergyman's Daughter*, the results were most happy. The question of why this is so is an interesting one. Perhaps it is because the very existence of these elements makes nonsense of the enormous mass of lies concerning bourgeois morality, justice, and equality. If capitalism is truly such a blessing why their misery? The daily life of these people is a self-evident contradiction of the entire contemporary spirit and ethic of success and ambition—for the "down and outers" are beyond success and their ambition is limited to obtaining the next meal. Its existence dictated by purely elemental needs, this stratum is beyond the categories of good and evil as well and bears no responsibility for the rotten social structure from which it suffers most. In a word the unemployed and unskilled are pure victims and there can be no self-consciousness, hesitancy or guilt on the part of the individual who espouses their right to live. There is a kind of sensitivity, a susceptibility to the pain of others inseparable from genuine moral feeling, which can only be tranquillized by charity. The difference in this book's tone is thus accounted for in terms of Orwell's successful identification with and agitation for some of the victims of social injustice.

It is noteworthy that none of Orwell's writings, whether fictional or not, subsequent to *Down and Out* . . . show anything like the degree of identification with and sympathy for the subject or people dealt with, that that work did—and none are nearly as successful. This is an important matter, particularly as it concerns the novels. Orwell's rather mild contempt for Flory, in the early and otherwise generally good novel, *Burma Days*, was eventually to blossom (by way of such ineffectual characters as Catherine, George Bowling, and the puling child, Comstock) into the monstrous detestation he evidently felt for Winston Smith. The point is that if there is not at least some measure of sympathy between the writer and his characters there will be none between the work of art and its public; if the chief protagonist is completely repelling sympathy is impossible and thus the whole special aesthetic experience can never really take place.

The tediousness of *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* derives, in great measure, from the reader's utter lack of fellow-feeling for the chief character, Gordon Comstock. Comstock is supposed to be a man of principle, a poet who wishes to live completely outside the money world, untouched by its compulsions and surrenders. In the end, "of course", he gives up all of this "nonsense" to become an advertising writer. There is no particular tragedy in Comstock's final capitulation; one simply feels that here was an adolescent who jumped from an impossible extreme of saintliness to an opposite extreme of conformity:

"Social failure, artistic failure, sexual failure—they are all the same. And lack of money is at bottom of them all."

This is economic determinism with a vengeance. Apparently then, all that is necessary to solve any personal problem is cash. And this is the way Comstock "solves" all his difficulties.

He was thirty and there was grey in his hair, yet he had a queer feeling that he had only just grown up. It occurred to him that he was merely repeating the destiny of every human being. Everyone rebels against the money-code, and everyone sooner or later surrenders.²

Orwell notwithstanding, there are other determinants than money in this world—mettle, for example. Perhaps that and consciousness are the only

² As a matter of fact some, *the best*, don't. The contention that "everyone rebels" is another big overstatement.

things ever needed. In any case, one may question the alternatives presented. These consist, apparently, of either selling one's soul completely or vegetating. Prior to his capitulation Orwell's "man of principle" submerged himself in the underground of mass anonymity; he did not simply give up personal ambition, he abjured his specific gift as a poet, and, finally, all except the most elementary effort. Is this truly principled behaviour? It is, after all, very easy to allow oneself to deteriorate; and the fact that by so doing, Comstock was *personally* committing no harm—how much was that worth? Personal solutions are, in practice, never real solutions; the most individual problems are bound up with the social question and cannot be resolved apart from it. The man of integrity tries to assuage the pain and suffering of others and thus of his own sensitivity. To surrender one's consciousness, to give up effort is the height of irresponsibility. The underground requires no additions to its already swollen number—it does require a voice, a pen. The conscious, principled man is the instrument of the inarticulate mass.

The Clergyman's Daughter just misses being a landmark novel of the thirties. It is in the ample and marvelous old picaresque tradition; the heroine moves from sphere to sphere of English life—clergy, seasonal laborers, vagrants, private schools—and Orwell satirizes each social fraction with skill, artistry, and considerable humor. The piece on the migrant workers is excellent reportage; that on the tramp a brilliant, expressionistic chapter that would make a successful play, and the part concerning schools drawn with the sharpness of a Thackeray. Everything is perfect, except—a wretched philosophy of resignation, which contradicts all that precedes it, tacked on at the end:

She did not reflect, consciously, that the solution to her difficulty lay in accepting the fact that there was no solution; that if one gets on with the job that lies to hand, the ultimate purpose of the job fades into insignificance...

If this is so, why bother to criticize at all? Doesn't it really matter if a job is destructive or useless? Is it not an evasion of responsibility to simply get on with any job?—provided that one is conscious and able to change one's occupation. But Orwell has loaded the deck; his heroine is mysenophobic and presumably can do nothing except get on with the job. The ignoring of purpose furthers the alienation between the laborer and the product of his labor, which it is the function of criticism to expose, and which the novel does expose until it is twisted out of shape to conform to a tiresome moral of submission.

Though passivity is almost in the nature of an after-thought in the aforementioned work, it is of central importance in *Coming Up For Air*. This novel, written just prior to the outbreak of World War II, utilizes the flashback technique to contrast life before the first great war with that of the nineteen-thirties. Something of the enormous social regression which occurred between the two periods is captured—but the treatment makes it appear as though this were a *natural* catastrophe. As to the future:

It's all *going to happen*. All the things you've got at the back of your minds, the things you're terrified of, the things that you tell yourself are just a nightmare or only happen in foreign countries. The bombs, the food-queues, the rubber truncheons, the barbed wire, the coloured shirts, the slogans, the enormous faces, the machine-guns squirting out of bedroom windows. It's all going to happen, I know it—at any rate, I knew it then. There's no escape. Fight against it if you like, or look the other way and pretend not to notice, or grab your spanner and rush out to do a bit of face-smashing along with the others. But there's no way out. It's just something that's got to happen.

Needless to say it hasn't all happened yet—in England (the place Orwell

was writing about), after sixteen years. No doubt it (Fascism, not the "vision" of 1984 which is impossible) could happen—the degree of statification in England is enormous. Nevertheless, to repeat, it hasn't happened. So there still is time to make sure it *never* happens.

Despite strong tendencies in that direction, Orwell did not wholly subscribe, even after the World War II, to the doctrinal affirmation of defeatism. *Animal Farm* discloses that much at least. Nonetheless, this very much over-praised "fairy tale" is hardly a significant critique of Stalinism. New insights into the "laws of motion" of the Russian state are not offered. Orwell did nothing except reproduce the bare surface of totalitarianism—and even this in an inadequate fashion. The fabulous form, which, to be sure, is technically ingenious, beclouds the obvious nature of the author's effort. On the other hand, this same fanciful structure constitutes a considerable formal obstacle to dealing with the Russian development in depth. Given such a frame, one must either work with elementary notions or transgress the specific limitations of the fable; it is hardly an accident that this form is primarily employed in the literature of children and primitives.

The tale's divergences from historical events are as numerous as its similarities. More important, however, than the question of correspondence as such is the consideration of whether or not there is correspondence insofar as *decisive* happenings are concerned. Unfortunately, the richness of actual circumstance is often sacrificed to the sparse requirements of the fable. One very important case in point is Orwell's complete neglect of the NEP. The latter must necessarily play a central role in any genuinely critical study of post-1917 experiences, since its formulation and inception symbolized the alternative to the factual course of Russian development and illuminated the real nature of the revolution.³

1984 closed with a declaration of love for totalitarianism, with what Orwell himself once described as "worship of power"; *Animal Farm*, on the other hand, still preserves a disapprobatory attitude of sorts. The attitude is considerably vitiated however, by the immanent cynicism of Orwell's spokesman, the donkey, who, apparently, views history simply as a succession of shattered illusions and inevitable defeats. With the best will in the world, if alternatives are never noted, if only in principle, criticism will be weak.

The significance of any or all the foregoing books are as nothing compared to that of 1984. A few sincere friends of Orwell deplore this and feel that he should be rescued from his "triumph", by a re-emphasis upon the earlier works. This attempt to redress the balance is useful; nevertheless, 1984 is not to be simply shrugged off. It is a festering wound in the intellectual *corpus*, and wounds are ignored at perilous cost. The success of 1984 *appears* due, in general, to the coincidental mesh of an individual writer's

³ Lenin *always* insisted that Russia *by herself* could never achieve Socialism; this was because, for him, the political configuration of a state was ultimately determined by its material level—and Socialism required a high productive level such as was hardly even imaginable in Russia. If his reasoning was correct the Russian revolution was, despite everything, bourgeois in character. By 1923 the perspective of world revolution was considerably diminished; as a result, the *bourgeois* development of Russia could proceed in either of two ways:

A. In a modified traditional manner, along lines indicated by the NEP, e.g., private traders, independent peasantry and, as an ultimate consequence of these, a measure of that political democracy cognate with non-totalitarian bourgeois regimes.

B. In the fashion in which it actually developed after Lenin's death, with the repudiation of the NEP—as a state capitalist regime whose monolithic economic form dictated an equally monolithic political form.

decay with the disintegration of an entire social fabric. However, *1984* does not mirror the disintegration; instead it makes a fetish of it. The real secret of the novel's success therefore, arises from the fact that it has become a key work in the international literature of resignation. The latter rubric subsumes a number of contemporary intellectual currents, all of which proclaim that the "new look", the fashionable mode is defeat. Whatever their specific position in the ideological spectrum (in philosophy existentialism, in theology a renewed emphasis on original sin, in economics managerialism), the essence of the more recent ideas is always the same: there is no hope. On the other hand, the end of civilization is not declared imminent by thinkers of these schools; the consequences of the retrogression are rarely posed in so "crude" a manner—and for good reason as will be shown later. The future ordinarily envisaged is one of social stasis achieved despite an ever-contracting material and spiritual basis.

Considered formally, *1984* is surely the worst piece of writing Orwell ever did—pure melodrama. The plot is obviously rigged, the characters sketchy and uninteresting. *1984* is, in any case, so completely tendentious that there is virtually nothing to discuss except its politics. And the latter are little more than a warmed-up serving of James Burnham's thesis of the managerial revolution, against which Orwell had himself ably polemicised in 1946.⁴ Orwell's summary of Burnham's position makes his debt to the latter clear:

The new "managerial" society will not consist of a patchwork of small, independent states, but of great super-states grouped around the main industrial centres in Europe, Asia and America. These super-states will fight among themselves for possession of the remaining uncaptured portions of the earth, but will probably be unable to conquer one another completely. Internally, each society will be hierarchical with an aristocracy of talent at the top and a mass of semi-slaves at the bottom.

Orwell's criticism of Burnham's notion also bears repetition, since it applies with equal validity to his own *1984*:

Where Burnham differs from most other thinkers is in ... assuming that the drift toward totalitarianism is irresistible and must not be fought against, though it may be guided.

And again:

It will be seen that at each point Burnham is predicting a *continuation of the thing that is happening*. Now the tendency to do this is not simply a bad habit, like inaccuracy or exaggeration, which one can correct by taking thought. It is a major mental disease, and its roots lie partly in cowardice and partly in worship of power, which is not fully separable from cowardice ... Power worship blurs political judgment because it tends, almost unavoidably to the belief that present trends will continue. Who is winning at the moment will always seem invincible.

The question of the supposed inevitability of totalitarianism is indeed central. In *1984* the political form is determined not through the course of any real struggle, but in advance of one: totalitarianism has triumphed because there was and *could be no principled* opposition to it. Orwell states this categorically, without advancing reasons for his position—in this novel. The latter are easily inferred however from the author's other writings. In an essay on Koestler, for example, he had written of "... the impossibility of combining power with righteousness". The "power corrupts" theme is, in fact, something in the nature of an obsession with Orwell, as it is with so many of his contemporaries. However fashionable a maxim, there is no

⁴ James Burnham and the Managerial Revolution, by George Orwell. London, Socialist Book Centre, 1946. The quotations which follow are from this pamphlet.

logical or necessary relation between its subject and predicate. The force of the notion derives from its ideological value alone. That is, it serves as a convenient justification for those of the powerful who *are* corrupt, by rendering their corruption almost natural, elemental, and unavoidable. If power, *per se*, corrupts, then those who wield it are neither publicly responsible nor logically subject to criticism. Why such a notion would prove agreeable to some of those in power is obvious. Why it is agreeable to intellectuals, who exercise no real power, is another matter. It is only partly due to the dependence of the intelligentsia upon "captured" organs of expression. Such a cynical doctrine also absolves the thinker of *his* chief responsibility—to ceaselessly scrutinize and frankly report upon the fashion in which power is actually being exercised. This, to be sure, requires courage, persistence, and attention. Few intellectuals have met the test and Orwell is not among these few.

As a corollary of the "power corrupts" theme, Orwell presents, in 1984, the conception that "power is not a means but an end". Hence no group in power has or will ever voluntarily surrender its power. This is, unquestionably, a distortion of history. Actually some factions in power, the most enlightened certainly, have surrendered their perquisites when their social functions ended. The case of classical Athens might be mentioned: the aristocratic tyrants, Solon, Peisistratus and Cleisthenes, effected a complete social revolution, which favored the entire nation at the expense of their own class privileges.⁵ In this instance power neither corrupted nor was it an end in itself. The most important general conclusion to be drawn from the controversion of the Orwellian "dynamic" of power is that totalitarianism is not unavoidable. One may for instance ask if the Russian development was inevitable. The program on which the Bolsheviks rode to power—"bread, peace and land"—was, in itself, hardly ultimatumist. Such unquestionably popular demands might have been realized by any democratic government enlightened and courageous enough to proclaim and act upon them. Had something of this nature taken place, the entire course of contemporary world history would have been changed. Even given the revolution, as already indicated in the discussion of the NEP, Stalinist fascism need never have existed and, as a consequence, the fascist regimes it spawned (in Central Europe and Asia) or was midwife to (Hitler Germany and Franco Spain) need also not have arisen. The possibilities are infinite—but it is fruitless to discuss them, except insofar as the point is made that totalitarianism has never been an inevitable development anywhere in the modern world.⁶

Orwell is not content with simply denying the possibility for a principled opposition to totalitarianism, he must celebrate the omnipotence of the state as well. In general, it can be said that totalitarianism is a symptom of social decline. As such the basic fact about it is not its strength but its weakness. An enormous parasitic police-apparatus is necessary to keep the whole from crumbling to pieces. The degree of the people's unprecedented disaffection from such regimes was amply demonstrated by the voluntary surrender of millions of Russian soldiers to the German armies immediately after Hitler's

⁵ See *The Greeks*, by H. D. F. Kitto. Penguin. Especially pp. 95-109.

⁶ Not touched upon at all in this discussion of "... the impossibility of combining power with righteousness" is the fact that a political group can function effectively even though it exercises no power over people at all. *The Great Utopia*, published in *Contemporary Issues*, no. 5, elucidates the theory of non-political politics, while the actual functioning of friends of this periodical illustrates the practice.

invasion of Russia in 1941. That the Russians eventually did fight Hitler is of course no indication of their love for Stalin, but rather a result of their experience that Hitler was himself only another Stalin. It is not in the least fanciful to suppose that the German populace and armies might have similarly collaborated with the invading Allied armies in 1944-45 had they not been alienated in advance by the bestiality of the oncoming Russian military machine on the one side, and an iron-fisted unconditional surrender formula on the other. This has nothing to do with the question of whether or not modern totalitarian regimes can be overthrown by internal upheavals. The point involved is simply this: If a principled opposition functions from outside, fascism can, at the very least, be bottled up.

Orwell believes that the latter can preserve itself indefinitely—apparently because it possesses consciousness of its aim (power) and resources. It is necessary to demur here as well. Consciousness indeed appears occasionally under totalitarianism, but it is hardly *characteristic* of the system, e.g., the highest expression of totalitarian consciousness is the Plan—yet the Plan is, from its very nature, never more than a deception. Chaos, competition, red tape, over-bureaucratization, enormous thievery, unevenness, bribery, lies, padding of statistics are implicit features of every totalitarian Plan.⁷ Orwell paints a gloss of order, intelligence, and uniformity over a system which never enjoys these advantages. This is because he views the fascist state from the point of view of its own propaganda announcements instead of judging the phenomenon in terms of actual functioning. From the former angle, the state appears to tower over all, to take responsibility for everything, to foresee everything; from the latter standpoint, the state is dissolved into a jungle of private and conflicting wills.

Stendhal's *The Charterhouse of Parma* offers a contrasting picture of the totalitarian regime. Stendhal, who had experience as a diplomat, knew such states first hand and consequently did not fall into the error of hypostatization. The "all-powerful" state becomes, in his representation, a seething mass of petty intrigues and violent antagonisms, subject to the whims of a courageous prince, who looks under his bed for assassins each night before retiring, and who is the despised plaything of his chief minister and the latter's mistress. In a word, Stendhal, as artist and thinker, penetrated the appearance of totalitarianism to probe its essence. One may object that a petty Italian despotism does not compare to a modern Fascist empire; that different subjects require different treatment. Nevertheless, the necessary fiction which, in the first place, permits Orwell to write a novel concerning totalitarianism is the consideration that it is not really total, e.g., the "telescope" in Winston's home is not fully effective; Julia is contemptuous of the ideology she effects to espouse. The essence of the novel, as of any art form, is, in the most general sense, tension and its resolution. Reified totalitarianism, *per se*, excludes real tension between the individual and the state, as such it excludes the possibility of *artistic* representation. This is a principal reason why *1984* fails as a novel. There is no genuine tension, no struggle; the defeat is there from the beginning. At the same time, this is the reason for the importance of *1984*—it is a milestone in the dissolution of an art form—for it is itself already the absence or death of contention.

In a period when statification has become the principal threat to liberty, it is of some importance to understand that the enemy is not superhuman,

⁷ See *State Capitalism in Russia*, by M. S. Shiloh in *Contemporary Issues*, no. 7.

autonomous, or for that matter, clever. How perceptive can the totalitarians be if the final and inescapable consequence of their rule is destruction? Orwell may have seriously believed that a modern totalitarian world of continuous war could be stabilized and perpetuated—that the rulers could always keep devastation within bounds. This appreciative notion is valuable to totalitarianism in that it clouds the real consequences of such a political structure and thus blunts the edge of social criticism. The fact remains, however, that no totalitarian system has ever been free from blindness and none can ever be. Now that the margin between safety and the total destruction of the world has become so thin, it is doubly absurd to bank upon totalitarian consciousness. Even if actual world war is avoided, the consequences of simply testing the new weapons of the military, to take but one example, are so far beyond calculation and control as to constitute a grave menace to the perpetuation of the human race. In any case, how intelligent can the totalitarians be if they would exchange a golden age of plenty, an era of genuine equality, for the emptiest of trifles, "power"? Yet this is the "bargain" that the masters of Orwell's world have struck.

The hallmark of modern fiction is negative: the novel no longer stands in a critical relation to its time. The inner ferment of the great realist classics was paralleled by an outer tension between the art form itself and the society it amused but disturbed. Even the flight from reality of romanticism, which followed, was, in its own way, a rejection of the former's prosaic nature. With the appearance of naturalism, which flatly transcribed external entities ("facts") that were after all only fleeting moments of the social process, the tendency toward hypostatization took root. The most modern departure, for which *1984* serves as model if not pioneer, goes even further—it has perhaps taken the last step. For if naturalism ignored potentiality and development, *1984* denies their very possibility. Orwell reifies and surrenders in advance to everything that the best tendencies of art and life have struggled against since the beginning of the Renaissance.

Though *1984* was the product of Orwell's intellectual and artistic decline, it remains an important social document. Criticism, in general, has failed to understand the work properly. It has been dealt with either as a reflection rather than a symptom of social retrogression or as a personal testament. The latter method is all too easy: thus we are told *ad nauseam* that the author was very sick at the time the book was being composed; then Orwell's remark is quoted to the effect that the work would have been less horrifying had he not been ill while writing it; finally, the widely accepted theory is dragged in that Orwell committed suicide, if only by default. Certainly these things tell us something of the man—but what do they tell us of the book? The details of Orwell's physical, or indeed moral and mental state, do not help us evaluate *1984*, and evaluation is the prime job of criticism. Nor do such particulars substantially aid in explaining the book. This is because the work of art, or for that matter any creative production, has a life of its own, apart from its creator. That life is a function of the problems raised or the solutions attempted by the composition; and the problems and solutions are not individual but general, else the work would have no significance, would awaken no social response.

1984 is of interest not because it originates or resolves any question. On the contrary, the novel is necessarily unproblematic since it deals with a finished social structure. The interest derives rather from the question of how the work came to be, in the sense of how and why it was composed and

accepted in our time. The answer was intimated previously in the characterization of 1984 as a key work in the international literature of resignation. It is essentially a product of two factors: lowered consciousness and paralysis of will. Orwell himself was, ironically, aware of a general decline of consciousness, especially as this was manifested in the continuing emasculation of language.

As for the decay of will it is a function of irresponsibility—a calculated effect of the bureaucratization of modern life. Centralizing, institutionalization, bigness as such have eliminated much of responsibility, which is, in the final analysis, always personal. The atrophy of will is coeval with the disappearance of the independent producer and the rise of monopolies, whose mode, insofar as the individual employee is concerned, is buck-passing rather than decision-making. The disease is remediable, however. For, west of the Iron Curtain at least, individuals are not simply commodities. They still have private lives in the course of which they make decisions, accept responsibility, and take positions on matters they understand. The result, Orwell notwithstanding, is that general freedom is as much a future possibility as totalitarianism. The issue will be decided by the course of the struggle, and the course of the struggle determined by individual consciousness, courage, and responsibility.

THE EDITORIAL PRACTICES OF "LES TEMPS MODERNES"

IN Number 20 of *Contemporary Issues*, we published the first part of an article by Jules Laurents entitled "Experiment in Annihilation". On the 22nd November 1954 Mr. Marcel Péju on behalf of the editorial board of *Les Temps Modernes*, a French monthly magazine published by Jean-Paul Sartre, asked our permission to translate and publish Laurents' article. Permission was gladly given and *Les Temps Modernes* published the article in three instalments in their January/February, March and April issues.

A perusal of the first instalment of the article revealed, however, that very little care had been given to the translation and that one passage critical of Stalinism had been distorted. We therefore sent a letter with a list of errata and a correction of the distorted passage to *Les Temps Modernes* with the request to publish it. Our letter was not published and Mr. Péju instead promised us a "detailed reply within the next 48 hours". The promised reply had however not yet arrived when we received instalment 2 and 3 of the article. These two further instalments, although more carefully translated than the first one, again contained translation errors and one passage referring to the bestialities committed in Russia was left out.

A second letter was therefore sent to *Les Temps Modernes* and its immediate publication requested. To this letter, at last, Mr. Péju answered elaborately promising us, as can be seen from the part of his letter quoted below, to publish our corrections if we insisted. In response to this letter we submitted again the following slightly changed version of our second letter to *Les Temps Modernes*:

We are of the opinion that it is possible to lead an effective struggle against experiments with the hydrogen bomb only if such a struggle is conducted as much against the East as against the West. To condemn H-bomb experiments in America while approving or remaining silent about Russian experiments, is nothing but pure demagoguery. Therefore, in order to leave no doubt in the minds of the readers of Jules Laurents' article "Experiment in Annihilation", I should be pleased if you would publish the following correction, as well as a part of the conclusion which you omitted in the translation published in your No. 111.

In the first part of the translation, No. 109, you put in quotation marks "*Dictateurs du Kremlin*"; the correct translation is, "*la bande tyrannique du Kremlin*", without quotation marks. In putting the English text in quotation marks, you falsified the political opinion of the writer.

On p. 1458 of No. 111 (April), you omitted the entire conclusion. This, in view of your "slight" emendation concerning the high-handed gang in the Kremlin, is a grave omission, as you have in this way succeeded in suppressing every vestige of the author's opinions critical of Stalinism. The passage in question reads as follows:

"What answer can the American people give to their United Nations delegate, when he says that America must explode hydrogen bombs as long as Russia does? The answer is simplicity itself: America must stop its explosions regardless of what Russia does. The bestialities perpetrated within Soviet borders are many. If one of them happens to be the explosion of hydrogen bombs, to the detriment of all humanity, so much the worse for us all. But to answer this crime against humanity with larger and more frequent explosions only intensifies the jeopardy of the human race."

Mr. Péju's reply was in answer to our second letter which was similar to the above. He begins his letter with an apology for the translation errors pointing out that they were due to haste and lack of time and stating that

omissions were only made in order to shorten a very long article and he continues thus:

There remain three points about which you reproach us with having "falsified the author's political opinion". As this is a matter of principle, I am anxious to reply in detail. It is not the custom of *Les Temps Modernes* to distort the opinions of anyone. The practice of cutting quotations, of giving tendentious extracts or distorted fragments is alien to us. As far as Jules Laurents' article is concerned, it was because I had noticed its honesty, precision, documentary value and objectivity, that I asked your permission to republish it. It was not with the intention of distorting its meaning, nor am I aware that we have done so.

Indeed, the omission of a sentence on p. 1325 ("...—and intensifies the already critical problems of radioactive waste disposal—...") in which you see a perversion of the writer's ideas concerning the peaceful use of atomic energy—"of particular importance" you say for France—has a purely accidental character. We shall publish it if you so wish.

If we suppressed the conclusion, it is less because of the "author's opinions critical of Stalinism" than because this conclusion was an American point of view specifically addressed to an American public, and was of no direct concern to French readers.

Finally, we translated "high-handed gang in the Kremlin" by "dictators of the Kremlin", in quotation marks, which indubitably represents a perversion of the formulation.

I shall frankly give you the reason: it in no way embarrasses us that Mr. Laurents should consider the Soviet rulers "a high-handed gang"; nor does it embarrass us to pass this description on to our readers, though we find it, for our part, both summary and inexact. But in an article essentially devoted to American experiments with the H-bomb and their consequences; in an article which is not directly political but in the first instance documentary (and which we publish for this reason); in an article, finally, in which all assertions are carefully weighed, justified, discussed and in which the author is at pains not to put forward anything which he cannot at once prove; in such an article, it seemed to us frivolous to appear to take as "solved", in a sentence which evaded the question, the grave problem of the nature of Soviet rule. I am prepared to believe that for Mr. Laurents this judgment is amply justified; but he gives no reasons. And insofar as we pose the same problem to ourselves and give it a less summary answer, we did not wish to appear to sanction an opinion put forward in so hasty a fashion.

We could, you say, have translated it word for word and stated our disagreement in a note. That is so; and I should unhesitatingly have done so, here again, had I thought that you would have wanted it.

To omit to indicate, in an article wholly devoted to an American experiment with the H-bomb, that Mr. Laurents looks upon the Soviet rulers as a "high-handed gang" does not in fact amount to a "perversion" of his ideas—especially when this appraisal plays *no part* in his argument. One can perfectly well speak of this or that subject without adding that in any case one considers Stalin to be a miserable creature.

I have given you all these explanations in order that you might understand our point of view and, even if you do not share it, I trust you will find it legitimate. I particularly hope you will agree that it has never been our intention to falsify Mr. Laurents' ideas. He remains the sole judge—just as you are the only judges—finally, of what is and is not important in what he writes. Should he consider it indispensable, much though it is not the subject of his survey, to state what he thinks of the Soviet rulers, I shall bow to his decision. Once again I am prepared in our next number to publish the text of the conclusion we have left out, and to state that Mr. Laurents had written "high-handed gang in the Kremlin" (without quotation marks) and not "dictators in the Kremlin" (with quotation marks).

The assertion that "it is not the custom of *Les Temps Modernes* to distort the opinions of anyone" becomes a phrase without meaning when confronted with Mr. Péju's own admission that Laurents' very apt description of the rulers in the Kremlin was intentionally perverted by the editorial board of *Les Temps Modernes*. Mr. Péju and his friends may have their doubts "about the grave problem of the nature of the Soviet rule" but that was no reason to consider Laurents' opinions on Stalinism as "frivolous" and as "put forward in a hasty fashion", and under no circumstances had they any right to change Laurents' very clear characterisation of the Kremlin rulers as a

high-handed gang into a formulation which in real *Temps Modernes* fashion even doubts if one can call the Russian rulers *dictators*.

How untenable it is to label Laurents' views on Stalinism as hasty and frivolous Mr. Péju confirms himself when he states his belief that for Mr. Laurents these views may be amply justified. The omitted concluding paragraph speaking of "the bestialities committed within the Soviet borders" certainly leaves no room for doubt about the firmness of Laurents' views.

Mr. Péju justifies the *suppression*, as he himself calls it, of the concluding paragraph because he considers its contents as a purely American matter. But what is American about the point of view that American H-Bomb experiments cannot be justified by the fact that Russia is involved in similar experiments?

Mr. Péju's lame excuses and contradictory statements only underline what he tries to deny. *Les Temps Modernes* published Laurents' article because it criticises the American bomb experiments, but they are not prepared to tolerate in their columns a similarly unequivocal and outspoken criticism of Stalinism. Therefore the high-handed editorial dictators of *Les Temps Modernes* usurped the right to mutilate Laurents' article. Needless to say: The letter submitted by us has not been published to this day. The case of *Les Temps Modernes* shows once more how very well the editorial boards of allegedly democratic papers manage to manipulate public opinion. *Les Temps Modernes* considers itself to be of the "Left".

Péju in his letter is demagogically boasting of their pure and democratic practices. The reality behind these boasts is a ruthless censorship which leaves no room for honest and independent opinions and which is particularly noxious in so-called progressive publications like *Les Temps Modernes*.

REACTIONS TO "THE FLUORIDATION EXPERIMENT" IN ENGLAND

THE response to date to "The Fluoridation Experiment" (*Contemporary Issues* No. 26) has been most encouraging and people have written to us both here and in America. American reactions will be commented on separately by our friends over there, but in the meantime we propose reporting briefly on some of the English reactions.

Although fluoridation has been under way for some years in the United States, it is only recently that the Authorities here have introduced it, notably in Watford, Middlesex. The British Housewives' League is carrying out an anti-fluoridation campaign in Watford and we reproduce a letter received from the Chairman, Mrs. Joyce Mew, dated 24th January 1956:

I have read the article on fluoridation in your issue of February-March 1956 with great interest.

I enclose two recent issues of our periodical, *Housewives Today*, giving some further points of view. The November number is a record of work done by the League and its friends in this particular field. The December number gives a brief account of the Anti-Fluoridation meeting at Watford when I had the honour of taking the chair. I also enclose a reprint of a leader in the *Times* which you may or may not have seen.

Although I know that in the United States the main stress is laid on the possible dangers to health that may arise as a result of the fluoridation of public water supplies, we in England, as you will see from *Housewives Today*, are equally apprehensive about the threat to our constitutional liberties. Any departure from the accepted notion that one should be free to take or refuse a proffered dose from a most dangerous precedent which might be taken advantage of by a future and possibly less well-meaning administration.

Even those in favour of fluoridation admit it to be a "calculated risk". What right has a Town Council to "allow" its citizens to be guinea-pigs in an experiment with any risk whatsoever?

May I quote from the *New York Herald Tribune*? (January 15th 1956) "...many of the laymen opponents hint or openly say there is a conspiracy to put fluoridation over on the American people. The principal culprit they say, is the United States Public Health Service which has put down opposition among scientists through its control of research grants and of its power over various medical journals where opposition could be voiced." This agrees with what Mr. Klerer has to say on Page 166 of his article. The extremely tough attitude of the Ministry of Health in this country makes one imagine the same accusation could be levelled over here.

I was interested in the comments on p. 120. The present world is menacing and only those with their heads buried, ostrich-like, fail to see it as such.

I am familiar with the arguments that follow from p. 121, in principle, if not in detail. The fact is the cause of caries is not known (Widdowson, a standard work in our teaching hospitals, gives 30 pages to this subject without coming to any definite conclusion). Nor is the precise action of the various forms of fluorine upon the teeth understood. The Health Authorities are taking a great deal upon themselves in proposing to cure a condition of which they know little by means of a treatment of which they know less.

I am full of admiration for Mr. Klerer's statement on the cause of caries (p. 161, para. 4); This is excellent!

On the subject of the Organic Movement, I think his comments are a little harsh. There is undoubtedly some virtue in foodstuffs grown in this way. Thousands of farmers and gardeners throughout the world are quietly and unostentatiously putting these principles into practice because they have found, either from their own experience or from the experience of their forebears, that they work. This is something of great value but it achieves little publicity. Only the cranks, the lunatic fringe, are vociferous. I gather that it is for their dogmatic assertiveness that Mr. Klerer shows a certain contempt. However, his remarks on p. 164 would seem almost to indicate that he himself is a devotee of organic husbandry.

The reference to the Salk vaccine on p. 162 is only too appropriate. In the last few days we have seen the same thing happening in our English newspapers.

I am heartily in agreement with everything Mr. Klerer has to say on pp. 166 and 167. I hope these points of view will prove of interest to you and possibly your readers.

The important point raised by Mrs. Mew with regard to the Watford experiment concerns precisely the arbitrary action of the Council in foisting its decision on the population of that district without regard to the democratic right of the citizens who elected them to be consulted on the matter. This is not, unfortunately, an isolated instance of the curtailment of civil liberties in this country, where the trend towards administrative tribunals grows apace and prevents the citizens' right of appeal to the legally constituted courts of the country. This has led to widespread and dictatorial practice by the Government and Local Authorities, culminating in the now infamous case of Crichton Down. It is important as Mrs. Mew stresses, that in waging the campaign against fluoridation of water supplies on the ground of its danger to health a stand must be taken on the aspect of the threat to civil liberties.

On the question of the Organic Movement, however, Mrs. Mew feels that Mr. Klerer has been "harsh". In his reply dated the 22nd February, our friend Andrew Maxwell wrote:

One point I should like to discuss briefly. You write that "on the subject of the Organic Movement, ... (Klerer's) ... comments are a little harsh. There is undoubtedly some virtue in foodstuffs grown in this way." I do not think there is any disagreement on the virtue of organically grown foods. But it is a different thing to criticise the Organic Movement for its pretensions in presenting organic farming (within the profit system!) as a panacea for all major social ills. The criticism amounts to this: While the protagonists of organic farming correctly see the danger of irresponsible chemicalisation in food production, and, also correctly, stress that organic farming has incontestable advantages over chemicalised agriculture, they refuse to admit that chemicalisation is an unavoidable development given the existence of capitalism (production for the sake of profit). Their recommendations may be very good in principle with respect to agricultural practice, although they can be of use today only to a very small number of people. But they do not approach the matter as a social question, and therefore do not enable the public to understand the problem of chemicals in food within the present system of production, and fail to show what is to be fought, and by what means, if the poisonous evil is to be eradicated. On the other hand, the protagonists of organic farming nurture the illusion that the problem of chemicalisation can be solved merely by a wholesale return to the use of organic methods in *farming*, without however indicating how this is to be achieved in a social system of which industrial (chemicalised) agriculture and the domination of the chemical industry are inseparable features.

Mrs. Mew wrote in her reply of the 28th February:

As I am unable to visualise a world without profit, ... I can only imagine the word as used by you has some esoteric meaning which escapes me...

To sum up; it is all a question of means and ends.

End. That the individual shall be free to develop his body and direct his spirit according to his lights.

Means. He must therefore be able to choose or refuse one thing at a time without let or hindrance from what Lord Hewart called "Statism" on the one hand or entrenched monetary interests on the other.

It is upon this principle that our objection to the fluoridation of public water supplies is based.

It is precisely the "entrenched monetary interests" to which Maxwell refers when he blames the "production for the sake of profit" (and not for the needs of the people) for the growing chemicalisation of our food.

Mrs. Winifred Sykes, Vice-Chairman of the British Housewives' League adds to Mrs. Mew's approbation of Mr. Klerer's article in her letter to us of the 24th January.

I found it one of the most comprehensive and best set out articles I have read on the subject, and that is saying a good deal since I have studied the subject exhaustively for the past four years.

Mrs. Doris Grant, also of the British Housewives' League, writes to Miss Lee on the 14th January:

Thank you very much indeed for sending me the copy of *Contemporary Issues*. I am more than grateful to you; this article on fluoridation by Mr. Klerer is one of the best I have yet read, and I have read a great number.

This article would prove most valuable ammunition in our anti-fluoridation campaign. As well as sending copies to a number of Watford Town Councillors, I would like to send copies to Lords Teviot, Hankey, Douglas of Barlock, and Sempill, who are all very opposed to fluoridation and who are going to raise the matter in the House very soon.

There is only one thing that I could add to the information in Mr. Klerer's excellent article. The latest news I have received from the States is a warning about the effect on children of drinking fluoridated water. This warning has come from three independent sources, all qualified experts. Two American chemists, and Dr. Charles Brusch, of the Brusch Medical Centre, Cambridge, Mass., warn that at one part per million, fluoride interferes with the enzymatic breakdown of carbohydrates and with the activity of vitamin B₁, thereby interfering with proper nutrition. Also, that continued use of sodium fluoride at one part per million in the drinking water of children would in time render them more susceptible to the ordinary diseases of childhood; that it would also render them highly sensitive to leukemia, polio, diabetes, cancer and tuberculosis. No mother in this country would be willing to take such risks where her children's health is concerned. Why should the Ministry of Health dare to take it?

Again my very grateful thanks.

Subsequently Mrs. Grant also draws our attention in her letter of the 27th January to cases of sodium fluoride poisoning reported in the Press that week.

Why indeed should the Ministry of Health arrogate to itself the right to make human guinea-pigs of the community? It is not for the Ministry of Health to decide what is, or is not, good for people. After full and public consideration of all known facts about the ingestion of fluorine it is for the people themselves to decide whether or not they wish to be subjected to experiments of such a nature. If the authorities, as in the case of the Watford Council, refuse to act according to the wishes of the electorate, they must be compelled to do so by overwhelming public pressure.

London, 12th April, 1956.

N. PARKER.

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Published by Contemporary Press, 37, Penton Street, London, N.1, and

Printed by Drukkerij Holland N.V., N.Z. Voorburgwal 58-62, Amsterdam-C., Holland

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